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The Simulacrum in Coded Discourse Parody:

The Hunger Games and *The Year of the Flood*

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To Mário, Aline, and Maria Zilda.

Anyway the wind blows.

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"You are an adult. The old one, the wise one. Stop thinking about saving your face. Think of our lives and tell us your particularized world. Make up a story. Narrative is radical, creating us at the very moment it is being created. We will not blame you if your reach exceeds your grasp; if love so ignites your words they go down in flames and nothing is left but their scald. Or if, with the reticence of a surgeon's hands, your words suture only the places where blood might flow. We know you can never do it properly - once and for all. Passion is never enough; neither is skill. But try. For our sake and yours forget your name in the street; tell us what the world has been to you in the dark places and in the light."

(Toni Morrison, in her Nobel Prize speech)

Abstract

This thesis examines Margaret Atwood's *The Year of the Flood* and Suzanne Collins's *The Hunger Games*, aiming at an analysis on the presence of Baudrillard's concept of simulacrum in parody of coded discourses. I argue that both novels present several instances of parody of coded discourses, according to Hutcheon's definitions, with emphasis on science fiction, mass media, religious discourses, and experiences of nostalgia. In the construction of these parodies, I identified frequent use of the simulacrum, Baudrillard's concept from *Simulacra and Simulation*. I analyze how the simulacrum affects the novels in their many spheres, commenting on issues of genre, experience and mediation, based mainly on Baudrillard, Foucault, and Kellner. Considering that parody can approach codes and not only single artworks, I compared the simulacrum's presence with parody's, to discover that they often coincide or, more specifically, that the simulacrum is part of the construction of parodic inversion, questioning, or exposure. I conclude that, in cases of parody of coded discourses with the simulacrum in the analyzed novels, there is an effect of exposure of illusions. These illusions comprehend notions of unmediated communication, including storytelling and mass media forms, and notion of freedom of choice or identity, in regard to politics of identification and the pervasiveness of identity commodification.

Keywords: parody, simulacrum, science fiction, dystopian fiction.

Resumo

Esta dissertação examina *The Year of the Flood*, de Margaret Atwood, e *The Hunger Games*, de Suzanne Collins, e seu objetivo é analisar a presença do simulacro, conceito de Baudrillard, em paródia de discursos codificados. A proposta de trabalho é que os romances apresentam diversas instâncias de paródia de discursos codificados, de acordo com a definição de Hutcheon, com ênfase em ficção científica, mídia de massa, discursos religiosos e experiências de nostalgia. Na construção dessas paródias, foi identificado uso frequente do simulacro, conceito descrito por Baudrillard em *Simulacro e Simulação*. Primeiramente, analisa-se como o simulacro afeta os romances em suas várias esferas, com comentários sobre assuntos de gênero textual, experiência e mediação, com as bases teóricas principais de Baudrillard, Foucault e Kellner. Considerando que a paródia pode abordar códigos e não apenas obras de arte, compara-se a presença do simulacro com a da paródia. Descobre-se que estas coincidem com frequência ou, mais especificamente, que o simulacro é parte da construção da inversão, questionamento ou exposição em paródia. Conclui-se que, em casos de paródia de discursos codificados com o simulacro nos romances analisados, encontra-se um efeito de exposição de ilusões. Essas ilusões abrangem noções de comunicação não-mediada, incluindo formas de narrativas e de mídias de massa, além da noção de liberdade de escolha ou identidade, com relação à política de identificação e a difusão da identificação por *commodities*.

Palavras-chave: paródia, simulacro, ficção científica, distopia.

Contents

Introduction

     As dystopian narratives attract more attention in literary circles, questions are raised on the characteristics they habitually select from daily life and expand in order to fashion an end to human civilization. Some novels portray scenarios in which the planet falls victim to global warming or alien invasions, while others approach the human mind in narratives of state violence and overused vigilance. A rising trend of dystopias approach the influence of mass media in controversial societies: in *The Hunger Games*, Suzanne Collins extrapolates from the Orwellian ideas of vigilance and the recent pervading aspect of reality television. Margaret Atwood, in *The Year of the Flood*, presents the decay of media and of state as the world is swept by a biological agent. With the inclusion of mass media discourses in the creation of dystopian worlds, the simulacrum spreads its reach within literature, acting with postmodern parody as a trait in dystopian novels.

     Jean Baudrillard made the concept of simulacrum circulate in the academic debate by discussing the substitution of the real by the hyperreal, that is, an appreciation of the copy over an "original". However, this copy cannot be called so *per se*, since it does not have that "original" referent. The simulacrum relates to a copy that stands alone and creates another realm of perception in which its simulation as the real is the norm. In mass media discourse, this is a widely discussed topic, as I elaborate further in this thesis. While *The Hunger Games*, for instance, approaches the simulacrum via reality TV shows, *The Year of the Flood* presents characters affected by the simulacrum that have an impact on the way they deal with their post-apocalyptic context.

     By inserting simulations and simulacra in their constructions of dystopian societies, Collins and Atwood parody the presence of mass media and other daily codes

in postmodernism: *The Hunger Games* and *The Year of the Flood* often parody mass media and science fiction clichés in their internal rules and narrative references. I intend to show this exploration of mass media discourse as a coded discourse, according to Linda Hutcheon's theory of parody. Her theory presents itself as an alternative to the common notion of parody that is the ironic mimicry of a single artwork within another one (*Parody*, xii). Through the idea of mass media discourse as a coded discourse, I intend to establish that there is genre parody, still according to Hutcheon's theory, in both novels. In addition, this thesis seeks to elaborate on how the simulacrum is both a tool for parodying mass media and a result of its power in shaping perception and reality in postmodern dystopias. The issue of mass media is differently approached in both novels, but, when seen as a set, the works may help trace the effect mass media discourse has on the public opinion, on the idea of reality, and on aesthetic value.

Published in 2008, *The Hunger Games* (henceforth HG) is a first-person narration, whose voice belongs to Katniss Everdeen, a sixteen-year-old girl who lives in District Twelve. The novel is set in Panem, a futuristic dystopian society. The reader is led to believe by the narrator that the country contains the remains of human society, since there is no mention of other countries. The Capitol stands on higher ground, as the other districts form circles around it; higher-numbered districts are poorer, while low-numbered ones are privileged. The story starts on what Katniss calls "Reaping day": every year, two teenagers, from twelve to eighteen years of age, have their names picked, though not at random, to participate in the Hunger Games. In the Games, those two children from each district are sent to an arena, where they are instructed to fight to death. The Games are not only televised, but it is also mandatory to watch them at every household in the country. Katniss describes her best friend Gale, her mother, and sister, Primrose; she has

a particular bond with her younger sister, whose name is among the pool of children for the first time. When the names are drawn, Prim is sorted to go into the Games.

Because of her protective instincts, Katniss volunteers to go in her place. Since the attitude is unprecedented, the usual routine of the reaping is broken, she is taken to the stand to wait for the sorting of the male tribute. This tribute is Peeta Mellark, whose selection sends Katniss towards a flashback in which she explains how she and her family nearly starved after her father was killed in a mining explosion, until Peeta fed them against his mother's will. The plot enters a quick series of events in which Katniss and Peeta are transformed into instant celebrities. Before the Games, Katniss is surprised by Peeta's strategy to claim, during the last interview, that he had been in love with her since he could remember. While she sees it as a threat, as a portrayal of her as fragile and emotional, she is reminded of her poor people skills during the entire process: her mentor, Haymitch, reminds her that Peeta's strategy made her seem "desirable" (164).

During the first half of the Games, Katniss resorts to hiding on tops of trees, and her first kills are indirect. She eventually becomes allies with Rue, the youngest tribute, from District Eleven, who strongly resembles Primrose. When Rue is killed, Katniss performs her first active kill, on Marvel, from District One. The protagonist, then, undergoes a change in intentions: her initial objective, surviving, clashes with her hate towards the Capitol and the structure of oppression over the districts. However, the thought is not yet fully formed because she is distracted by the announcement of a change of rules: there can be two victors, but only if both of them belong to the same district. Once Katniss finds Peeta, they hide out in a cave, where Katniss eventually chooses to take Haymitch's advice and kisses Peeta, providing the audience with the romance they had been expecting.

As the three remaining tributes are attacked by mutations of wolves with the faces and voices of the deceased tributes, Katniss eventually manages to kill Cato. As they wait for the announcement that they won, the Gamemaker states that the rule allowing two victors was annulled. Katniss, experiencing the same feeling of revolt from Rue's death, raises a handful of poisonous berries. Katniss and Peeta already have their mouths full of them when the cannon announcing the two victors of the 74th Hunger Games is fired. Katniss must now simulate that her "stunt with the berries" (433) was actually a desperate act of love, instead of a symbolic challenge to the system of the Games and the Capitol itself. She is taken home as victor, but to live with the constant fear of letting her true personality slip at any point, which could have destructive consequences for her family and her district.

Published in 2009, *The Year of the Flood* (henceforth YF) is a fragmented story told by two narrators with different perspectives: Toby, an adult woman, whose narration is in the third person, and Ren, initially a child, whose narration is in the first person. Owing to the diversity of voices in the very structure of the story, it is troublesome to attempt a linear explanation of the plot; therefore, the brief summary provided here cannot be considered as a study guide or a "map" of the story, which is intentionally fragmented.

Toby is introduced as a lone character, isolated in an abandoned spa. Several chapters approach her attempt at survival through the small garden she cultivates as she waits for the pigoons, mutations roaming the wild, to eventually corner her. The reader is fed small bits of information until the conclusion emerges: Toby does not know if she is the last person alive; she has had no contact with humans for a long time. All she knows is that a type of virus seems to have destroyed everyone and she has been living since with provisions she saved from the time before the destruction and with her gardening skills.

Toby's decay is intrinsically linked with the shape Atwood gave to her dystopian society: differently from the scenario in HG, there is no tangible government. Ultra-capitalism is the rule of thumb for all human organization: the authority receives the irony and playful name of CorpSeCorps; people come to live either in the Compounds, enormous complexes of housing, entertainment and business, or the Pleeblands, the outer world, where street violence goes unmonitored and most human rights are ignored completely. Toby, unsurprisingly, has to flee to the Pleeblands, where, without an identity, she resorts to selling hair, blood, and even her eggs, until she loses her ability to bear children in the surgical process. Without anything else she could sell, Toby starts working at SecretBurgers, where she is raped by the manager and constantly has her life threatened. One day, tipped off by her ex-colleague, a vegan cult group appears and confronts Blanco, Toby's manager, and rescues her to their occupied buildings.

The God's Gardeners, guided by Adam One, lead a life that marches in the opposite direction of the society they are inserted in. They do not eat anything from animal origin, except perhaps for honey, which they take from the bees they care for themselves. There is also a strong Christian appeal in their cult; Adam One provides the members with sermons that try to conciliate Christian dogmas with scientific discoveries. The hierarchy is composed of Adams and Eves, whose titles are followed by a number that indicates their field in the cult. After Pilar dies, Toby becomes Eve Six, in charge of bees and plant treatments. She is forced to leave the Gardeners and go into hiding after Blanco discovers that she had been living with the Gardeners all that time. Toby undergoes a makeover (skin tone, voice, hair, eye color) and she is sent to work at a spa, under the alias Tobiatha. She sticks to the persona, eventually being the only one left behind after what the Gardeners call "the waterless flood", leading to her stranded situation in the beginning of the novel.

Meanwhile, Ren is introduced as a dancer at the nightclub Scales and Tails, where she has been stuck in lockdown since the same "waterless flood". As she builds her narrative, the reader learns that she was born in the Compounds, but, at a very young age, her mother eloped with her lover, Zeb, in the middle of the night. Zeb would prove to be one of the Gardeners, Adam Eleven, but his interest in Lucerne was never significant. Meanwhile, Ren is left to adapt among the Gardener children, making friends and going through part of her puberty, until Lucerne decides, after another fight with Zeb, that they would be returning to the Compounds. Back in the Compounds, Ren has, once again, to adapt to the consumerist environment around her.

Ren's father, a scientist, is kidnapped and the CorpSeCorps decide he is not worth paying off; that means Ren and her mother are suddenly left without a penny. Lucerne eventually finds another man to support her and Ren is left to fend for herself. After incidentally working at the same spa Toby manages, Ren decides becoming a dancer was a better idea; that is the last time Ren and Toby meet before the "waterless flood."

The relationship between the two narrators, until that point, is more teacher-student; they meet again after Ren is set free by her childhood friend Amanda, and they eventually find their way to Toby. There is a series of events involving their reunion, the reappearance of Blanco, along with two other vicious men. However, they manage to take Amanda, who suffers a variety of forms of violence. The extent of her suffering is yet unclear in the end of the novel, which involves three elements: Toby rises to the challenge, shooting and/or arresting the men and saving an extremely traumatized Amanda. The conflict is even more complex because of the Crakers, genetic bioengineered posthumans, introduced in *Oryx and Crake*; and Jimmy, who had been living among the Crakers and believed, up until that point, that he was the last man alive. As the novel ends, it is unclear whether humankind will stand a chance, whether Jimmy and Ren will be romantically

reunited, among other issues. There are several questions left unanswered, particularly concerning what actually caused the waterless flood.[1]

These two novels, published in the end of the last decade, are exemplary expressions of the trend that postulates future contexts involving the destruction or succession of humanity and its civilization. Both novels explore post-apocalyptic scenarios, meaning that there has been an event or series of events leading to the end of global society as we know it: in YF, there is a before and an after to the "waterless flood" (a biological weapon that wipes nearly all humans in order to enable new life, the Crakers, to repopulate the Earth). On the other hand, in HG, the society in which the Games blossom is built on the remains of North America, after the planet was essentially destroyed by droughts, fires, and other natural disasters. The discourse of mass media in HG is not entirely reliable as to how that destruction came about, since Katniss learns so through the biased Capitol education, known for manipulating knowledge and history (its version of what happened to District 13 being a striking example).[2] It is fair to consider that they are the only remains of humanity. In addition, both novels portray main characters who strive for survival and not for political or societal changes for themselves. They present a dystopian setting in which no structural changes are expected by the protagonists as they face eminent death. They are able to move between gender roles and forms of behavior as they see fit, since their ultimate goal is survival.[3]

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[1] Some of these answers can be found in *Oryx and Crake*. Jimmy's friend from high school, Glenn, calls himself Crake (for an extinct Australian bird); for reasons unclear, he designs the Crakers and engineers the BlyssPluss pill, sold as a contraceptive and pleasure-enhancing drug. It actually carried a deadly virus, carried through the air, against which humankind stood no chance.

[2] Capitol education states that District 13 would have been reduced to dust after a small dissidence against the Capitol, serving as a cautionary tale against revolution.

[3] See "'Killer' Katniss and 'Lover Boy' Peeta: Suzanne Collins' Defiance of Gender-Genred Reading", in *Of Bread, Blood and The Hunger Games*, for information on HG, and Sá's thesis chapter on gender in YF.

Most critical work on the *MaddAddam* trilogy[4] is focused on *Oryx and Crake*, since the publication of YF is considerably recent in terms of academic research, having been released in 2009. Survival is a pervading concept throughout Atwood's literature. Melissa de Sá, in her Master's Thesis, maps the strategies for individual survival in Oryx and Crake and YF, emphasizing the role of storytelling among these strategies. Sarah Appleton analyzes Jimmy psychoanalytically, discussing the roles other characters play in his inner monologue. Her article is based on *Oryx and Crake*, even allowing for the interpretation that the entire action of the novel happens in his head, a reading later discarded as YF was published. Melissa de Sá stresses one particular trace of the universe created by Atwood, contrasted by the emphasis on storytelling: as Jimmy portrays the dominance of hard sciences and math over the humanities and the arts, characters unconsciously resort to narrative practices in order to survive. A similar pattern emerges in HG: education, in Panem, resembles military practice for creating perfect tributes, with a number of scientists (who receive higher importance in the following books, particularly *Catching Fire*) among their citizens, with an elimination of all training in art and social sciences. Katniss herself has a talent that she dares not show the Capitol during or even after the Games: music, as commented by Tammy Gant. An exception includes when she sings for a fallen tribute during the competition.

Studies about HG usually approach the story as a whole, instead of just one of the novels, arguing for a wider range of argument and for a complete view of the work. Yonah Ringlestein claims that the series issue a break with the escapist idea behind the construction of most alternate worlds, since most HG fans state they would never wish to live in Panem, whereas fans of other franchises are eager to live in Hogwarts or Middle Earth, for instance (373). Ringlestein also discusses the matter of a "hunger" for reality

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[4] As the three books written by Atwood came to be called, comprising *Oryx and Crake*, *The Year of the Flood* and *MaddAddam*, the latter released in 2013.

from audiences, providing a degree of distance from their daily lives. In addition, she uses notions of transmedia to analyze the series, so the literary in the series is narrowed down to a corner of the discussion.

Other researchers have approached HG as a teaching tool, to spice up classroom discussion or even engagement in social action, particularly Amber Simmons. Susan Tan, on the other hand, analyzed the tributes as children sacrifice, with the result of Katniss being studied as a child (she is sixteen years old when the story begins) and not a woman, though she is often sold as a full-grown woman, not just by the Capitol marketing, but also by the narrative itself (56). This perspective accounted for several analyses of Katniss as a symbol of woman agency, but most studies focusing on that are turned to audience response and not to literature and world building, such as the essays by Bill Clemente, Katheryn Wright, and Shannon Mortimore-Smith, collected and edited by Mary Pharr and Leisa Clark. Bill Clemente approached the relation between the story and the economic crisis in the United States around the time of publication; Ellyn Lem and Holly Hassel analyzed the inversion of gender roles in the performances of Katniss and Peeta; Amanda Firestone compared the notion of heroism in Katniss and the protagonist of another popular contemporary series, *Twilight*. More importantly, the section on "Resistance, Surveillance and Simulacra" in *Of Bread, Blood and Hunger Games* is particularly relevant for this thesis, considering the heavy influence of mass media discourse in HG.

Departing from the creation of a marketable symbol, Amy Montz describes how Katniss is almost literally produced for the audience, for the cameras, and how she grows to perform similarly for District 13 (ch. 13). Kelley Wezner approaches the idea of panopticon; from Foucault's and Bentham's architectures of power and surveillance, she projects them into the notion that one may or may not be under surveillance, resulting in

a subject constantly acting for the cameras. Helen Day compares HG with other stories that are famous for their influence on simulacra being aligned with the struggle for survival, as is the case of her comparative analysis with *Battle Royalle* and *The Running Man*. The issue of spectacle and entertainment crossed with the fatal fight of children is further enlightened by Lena Bressin in her online article, commenting on the nature of "battle royal", a contest usually attributed to Roman gladiators that consisted of a group of men, usually slaves, fighting until there was only one contestant.

More importantly, Bressin briefly compares the battle royal in HG to the one found in Ellison's *Invisible Man*, claiming that they differ in the sense that Ellison's claim is more focused on race, whereas Collins' reading goes further towards class difference. Though Bressin is not entirely mistaken, there is a subtle degree of race imbued in HG, as the poorest districts also have darker skin. Overall, mass media discourse is already seen as a perspective for analysis concerning HG, but I investigate further the connection of simulacra and mass media as parody devices in relation to literature, especially the beginning of the story, the first novel in the series.

Other thematic collections of works on HG were recently published: *The Hunger Games and Philosophy: a critique of pure treason*, whose first chapter, written by the editor, Brian McDonald, approaches philosophical themes in the series. Although its tone is generally conversational, McDonald provides an insight into a possible contrast in the visions of mimesis and art in the series in Peeta and the Capitol. While Peeta could be seen as representing the traditional mimetic artist, who would spend days trying to find the perfect color found in nature, the Capitol extrapolates natural colors, where they were unrealistically intense. It is remarkable that McDonald does not mention simulacra, since he concludes that, "the will to imitate has been replaced by the will to power" (ch. 1). Other chapters are also particularly relevant for this thesis, such as Christina Van Dyke's

discussion of "natural" and "normal" in Panem, where the social norm shapes behavior, and not the other way around, signaling another possible expression of simulacra in the constitution of Collins' universe. Tom Henthorne, in *Approaching the Hunger Games Trilogy*, discusses the role of reality television in HG, calling on their language of edition: "Though largely unscripted, such programs are constructed, edited, and in some cases digitally altered so as to provide compelling narratives that both affirm prevailing beliefs and naturalize them by embedding them in contexts that represent themselves as real" (ch. 5). This is especially relevant to HG, as Katniss often experiences the limitations of her power of expression, since any act of defiance would be appropriately deleted from the selection broadcast on television.

YF, on the other hand, has a slightly higher number of academic works about it. Atwood enjoys literary attention since the publication of *The Handmaid's Tale*, from 1985, which is considered her debut in the writing of dystopias. Her writing is widely studied in the field of women writers, gender studies, and speculative fiction, preceded mostly by papers on *Oryx and Crake*. An example includes Serban Andreea's paper on cultural remapping in both *Oryx and Crake* and *The Year of the Flood*. Though there is an increased amount of reliance on plot analysis in detriment to theoretical argument, his claim of this devastated North America as the last remains of human civilization is solid. Hannes Bergthaller, on the other hand, focuses the discussion on the influence of the economic crisis from the last decade in the construction of Atwood's dystopian world (730). Although Bergthaller's strongest claim, which encompasses the aforementioned valuing of hard sciences over the humanities and arts, is mostly related to *Oryx and Crake*, it is also applicable to YF. Amanda's articulate manner eventually makes her an artist, or, more specifically, a performer. Her artistic expression is commodified, but, considering Ren's depiction of their last encounter, Amanda does not seem bothered by it. She

performs a sort of cool pose, both for Ren and her own investors, though her nonchalant description of how men would pay her to write words in big surfaces is probably more devoid of meaning than she lets out in her conversations with Ren.

Katarina Ladubova, in "Power, Pain, and Manipulation in Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* and *The Year of the Flood*", discusses pain and manipulation leading to an emotional death, in an attempt to establish the relationship between manipulation and simulation:

> I suggest that Baudrillard's concepts of simulacrum and manipulation are congruent with *The Year of the Flood*, since Baudrillard concludes that – given that there is no possibility to locate an origin, or reference, or the real, (as this is also impossible in Atwood's two dystopias) – then manipulation is associated with simulation. According to Baudrillard, they are located outside power because positions are reversible. Hence, the manipulated are simultaneously the manipulators and vice versa. (144)

Though my argument does not rely on a parallel between manipulation and simulation, it is necessary to acknowledge Labudova's paper as a possible landmark for simulation studies concerning Atwood's recent dystopia. While she considers the simulacrum present through mutual manipulation, performed by empowered and powerless characters in both books, I focus on the ways the simulacrum is used to convey a sense of post-media society that leaves several characters with echoes of feelings and reality. In an unpublished work, Sá has also approached the matter of double narrative in YF, claiming that Atwood parodies both the typical sermon discourse and the scientific one through Adam One's speeches. Simulacrum and parody have both been studied in these two works, but so far, this has been done separately. In addition, coalescing both works will

be fruitful in order to postulate that the use of simulacrum in the construction of mass media parody is not an isolated event, but a possible trend in postmodern dystopias.

Although many studies have focused on women studies and feminism when approaching both Atwood's and Collins' works, gender is analyzed in this thesis, mainly because there is a varied body of work that successfully explores this perspective in the academia and also because this thesis has another focus, which is based on mass media discourse analysis in postmodern dystopias. Gender is certainly a valid perspective, effectively approached in other works, but it is not the present focus of this thesis.

Chapter one, "No one's left to read the labels – The simulacrum and the remains of mass media", approaches the presence of the simulacrum in both novels, which are pervaded by the simulacrum, but in different ways. In HG, the loss of reference occurs mainly in the Games as a reality show. Differently from contemporary television shows, the Games are sold as homage paid by the districts, not simply for fun, since the tributes are killed in the process. In addition, HG works as a kind of destruction of history; Katniss's knowledge of the past alludes to commonsensical claims that it goes in circles. I argue that this is an allusion, not a statement, since the reader must coalesce her little knowledge of History with that of 21st century North America. She knows that the land where Panem is used to be North America, which was destroyed by a series of natural disasters. She describes its formation in thirteen districts, but does not seem to know anything about how the society in North America used to be, and seems to have even less knowledge of the Civil War and the thirteen colonies that were the beginning of the United States. The reader knows history is somehow being repeated, but that is never explicit in the book. At the same time, it is possible to see the simulacrum as a tool for this wiping off of records, since their sense of history only covers the last 74 years. Day comments, "Simulation, in this series, is always a temporary state: the real can be

hijacked, but it always returns. Just as Peeta's mind is hijacked by aversion therapy and tracker-jacker venom to hate Katniss, so he eventually recognizes the shiny quality of simulation" (ch. 16). Although it is debatable whether this so-called "real" can "really" be recovered, it is clear that the simulacrum plays an important role in the novel.

As for YF, the simulacrum does pervade society, but there is very little illusion about its impartiality. Ren and Toby are very casual in their depictions of the corporations, so the simulacra enforced by mass media are less powerful; they see their workings from the outside, aware of their manipulations. However, it is probable that they only see it from the outside because of their marginal journeys: when Ren is re-immersed in the Compounds, she has already been taught by the Gardeners. Her belief system is incompatible with the consumer society but, adaptable as she is, she settles and helps her mother simulate the narrative of their past that Lucerne forces on both of them. The Gardeners themselves have their own simulacra, in the very explicit value posed for Toby, "action precedes faith" (168), indicating that her performed belief was not a problem; in time, she would come to believe in their dogmas. Therefore, a detailed analysis of how parody and simulacra are played out in HG and YF enables the identification of the simulacrum as a pervading tool in postmodernist dystopias for genre parody, particularly mass media parody.

In chapter two, "Where you can starve to death in safety – parody and the postmodern narrative", I discuss Linda Hutcheon's definitions and differentiations for parody. The concept of ironic distance not necessarily linked to a humorous trait is central for that choice, since parody can occur without the effect of diminishing the importance of a given artwork through ridicule. Hutcheon points to a trend in postmodern parody as a form of conversation between artworks, as a pulling of threads. I am arguing that YF and HG parody mass media discourse in different ways, which problematizes the idea

that parody is carried out when a single artwork parodies a specific work. In regard to this, she claims, "we also need to restrict its [parody's] focus in the sense that parody's 'target' is always another work of art or, more generally, another form of coded discourse" (*Parody* 16), allowing for the consideration of a discourse instead of a single artwork as inspiration for parody.

It is important to note that my choice of theory of parody is due to Hutcheon's idea that parody does not necessarily entail the trait of ridicule. In her 1978 article, "Parody without ridicule: observations on modern literary parody", she provides a brief summary of what would be later published as her theory of parody, "more playful than ridiculing, more critical than destructive" ("Ridicule" 202), when the practice works as "dialectal synthesis". This is relevant in both novels studied for my thesis, since the two dystopias can be considered more "literary rather than polemic" (Henthorne, ch. 6) and an analysis that focuses on the playful rather than the controversial can contribute for the work done on parody as an "agent in literary history" (Müller 7) and its construction in postmodernist literature. The second chapter includes analyses of science fiction's, religious and mass media's coded discourses and an approach to the relationship between the concepts of parody and metafiction.

Finally, I present the effect caused in the case of simulacra-based parodies and the illusions about current society that they uncover and question. After analyzing instances of coded discourse parody and matching them with instances of the simulacrum, it was possible to notice that they often occur together. The illusions exposed and elicited by parody through the simulacrum range from matters of identity building to the fragility of the notion of narrative. As signs dealing with each other, narratives deal with each other, exposed as what they are, narratives; as a result, any claim to universal or absolute truth is void, in a hyperreality of human experiences and messages.

1. **"No one's left to read the labels" – The simulacrum and the remains of mass media**

Writers of dystopian and post-apocalyptic novels published in the last fifty years are increasingly aware of persons who are external to the source of power and societal change. Both in *The Hunger Games* and *The Year of the Flood*, the reader is presented with the perspective of others, peripheral individuals whose knowledge of the current state of affairs is often incomplete or manipulated. Contrary to the elitist demonstration of society that takes place in the utopian *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley, explained by engineers and doctors from the beginning, other characters, such as Toby, have always lived on the margins of their decaying states and, therefore, lacked that access to information. The factors surrounding post-apocalyptic and dystopian structures affect characters economically, gender-relatedly, or politically, shaping the story and the reactions attributed to them. That does not necessarily mean that this representation of exposure leads to the construction of any kind of agency within characters themselves; the way a character experiences his/her world alone does not indicate *bildungsroman*, or any other type of personal growth. On the other hand, these characters may represent a perspective of society that often goes unreported.

In HG, this representation occurs mainly through Katniss. When she becomes a tribute for the Hunger Games, she is suddenly swept from her former status to the one of an instant celebrity. As a result, she catches a morbid glimpse of the values and lifestyles from the Capitol. Her view of Panem becomes fragmented, its axis being the injustices she is presented with and her lifelong exposition to the naturalization of violence for her own preservation. On the one hand, her perspective of Panem changes according to the conflict between her need to kill and to simulate for self-protection, while on the other

hand she sees the outrage of the Capitol's rule over the districts in their state of fear. Her shifting positions provide the perspective of the Other[5], which permeates her narrative.

In YF, on the other hand, Ren grows up among the Gardeners, planting and composting, wearing dark baggy clothes, being suddenly reintroduced to the Compounds and emerged in websites and cosmetic technology. Toby falls from a sort of middle class to the very bottom of society, but during her tenure as Eve Six, she is inserted into the top-secret group MaddAddam. As a member of this group, she gains inside information that often diverges from what she could gather from mass media about the virus that started to decimate humankind. The positions occupied by Toby and Ren shift, such is the case with Katniss; neither one comes to exert any power themselves, despite those shifts. YF also introduces characters whose perspective of society diverges from the one found among the elite, but that marginal perspective does not sit still throughout the story.

Several questions can be posed based on issues of perspective and power. Because power is often exerted, in the novels, via propaganda, television and other mass media forms, one of the aims of this thesis is to explore the influence of those media in the construction of dystopias. This chapter scrutinizes the presence of diverse simulacra in HG and YF in relation to Baudrillard's theories, such as Kellman's approach to mass media, Chauí's commentary on the relation between those and the simulacrum, among other supporting theories.

1.1. From The Shift in Objects to the Era of Signs

The simulacrum, a concept coined during Ancient Greece by Plato, was further elaborated in postmodernism by Jean Baudrillard. He approached the shift of value between objects to signs, and eventually to another shift towards the era of the

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[5] In this thesis, I capitalize the word Other when referring to Glover's commentary on speculative fiction and its connections with perspectives from political minorities, such as women, black people, poor people, etc. Further discussion can be found in section 1.2.

simulacrum, in which signs cease to have referential value. This second shift, instead, constituted a web of self-directing signs. In *Simulacra and Simulation*, he states,

> The era of simulation is inaugurated by a liquidation of all referentials – worse: with their artificial resurrection in the system of signs, a material more malleable than meaning, in that it lends itself to all systems of equivalences, to all binary oppositions . . . It is no longer a question of imitation, nor duplication, nor even parody.. . . Never again will the real have a chance to produce itself – such is the vital function of the model in a system of death (2).

This, he claims, is a transformation from the famous relation in Saussure's signified and signifier. There is no longer a linear connection between the signifier and the signified. Meaning is dealt with in relation to a chain of signifiers, independent from the signified.

Douglas Kellner comments on commodities and signs in *Jean Baudrillard: From Marxism to Postmodernism and Beyond*: "Commodities, like language for Saussure, are both signifiers and signifieds, with the features of abstraction, equivalence and interchangeability which Saussure ascribed to the linguistic sign" (21). The relation between the commodities and the simulacrum, for Baudrillard, lies in the way society has come to build identification through possession; having a mobile phone, for instance, means significantly more than being able to reach other individuals who also have a phone. Instead, the several models of mobile phones work as an illusion of a diversified choice; as these variations receive meaning, they will affect the buyer's identification as, say, a fan of cutting-edge technology, a fan of open software, or fans of related objects.

Identification is always asserted within a sign-value system, graded from high to low prestige variations that replicate themselves endlessly. Such replication accommodates commodity production. Sign-value, as commented by Kellner when

describing Baudrillard's criticism of Marxism, is "generated through hierarchical ordering among commodities, in which, for instance, certain types of cars or perfumes attain varying prestige through signifying the rank, social position and status of their owners or consumers" (22). The commodification of mobile phones mentioned previously can be seen as an example of the simulacrum, since they may signify an inexistent or meaningless status or social standing.

When discussing simulation and the simulacrum, Baudrillard occasionally employs words that seem to indicate value. When he says "worse", there is an implication that the loss of concrete references was, in a way, a fall for humanity. He does not address the issue of value in this shift directly, perhaps because making such degrees of value explicit would imply a suggestion for substituting or improving that system. He elaborates on the issue in descriptions of the role the simulacrum plays in postmodernism, its problems and subversions, but does not prescribe a solution.

Simulation, another device frequently seen in HG and YF, is defined by Baudrillard as "to pretend not to have what one has" (3). Baudrillard continues stating that simulation is not the same thing as a common pretense; in simulation, all factors are made to create the illusion of a presence so convincing that it blurs the line between the reality and simulation. His example comes via Litté, of a sick man who simulates his sickness by actually creating the symptoms in his body; if he presents the same symptoms of an actual sick person, is he not sick as well? The relevance of these two concepts, the simulacrum and simulation, is present in Atwood's and Collins' novels, as I discuss in this chapter.

The issue of identification through commodities is present both in YF and Atwood's previous novel, *Oryx and Crake*. In the earlier story, Jimmy narrates his perspective of life in the Compounds, his experience with Crake, the designer of the

waterless flood. More importantly, the reader can see how identification inside the privileged layers of society often takes place via commodities. For instance, Crake's choice of online games would later be considered a type of foreshadowing for his future endeavors in the destruction of humanity. Crake enjoys playing Extincathon, in which one must name extinct animals: the caption reads, "Adam named the living animals, MaddAddam names the dead ones. Do you want to play?" (*YF*, 269). The university they attend would construe their adult identities: whereas Jimmy goes to decadent Martha Graham, Crake goes to the high-profile Watson Crick Institute. In *Oryx and Crake*, we can see how commodities symbolize degrees of identification to a certain part of culture, according to the hierarchy in Atwood's world. Not unlike contemporary society's praise of hard sciences, the students from Watson Crick are the serious, successful, "brainiacs". Martha Graham, on the other hand, receives those with no talent, considered inferior citizens for their lack of skills, that is, skills such as Bioengineering, Math, and related disciplines. People are identified by the type of education they "purchase"; education is commodified and turned into a social label in the novel.

Self-identification through commodities is also present in YF; however, it does not so much indicate the meaningless hierarchy between products as it does the absolute lack of access to the very symbols of consumption. Ren, during her childhood among the Gardeners, suffers an inner conflict when she is removed from the consumerist society of the Compounds: she must wear the same damp, dark, potato-sack-like dress, just like all the other Gardeners, but she still has remains of the empty desire for commodities. She claims, "if the lilies of the field were our models – why couldn't we look more like butterflies and less like parking lots?" (66). In this excerpt, she craves the multiple variation of products from her previous life, feeling the lack of identification devices.

Though she has constant access to food, education, and recreational activities, Ren still eyes the street kids enviously. Ironically, their quality of life is much inferior to hers, but their access to commodities masks that reality:

> The street kids – the pleebrats – were hardly rich, but they were glittery. I envied the shiny things, the shimmering things, like the TV camera phones, pink and purple and silver, that flashed in and out of their hands like magician's cards, of the Sea/H/Ear Candies they stuck into their ears to heard music. I wanted their gaudy freedom. (66)

The "shiny things", for Ren, do not signify wealth. The little girl is aware of their struggle for survival, through small thefts and the avoidance of street violence. However, she still feels the appeal of the commodities over her, because the objects were "pretty", "glittery", associating those characteristics with freedom. The object in itself, such as a camera phone, ceases to carry any functional meaning for the character. Instead, the phone symbolizes a very specific freedom: the freedom to consume and, through that, to identify.

Surely, identification through commodities was not first debated by Baudrillard; however, he proposed sign value as a third component to use and exchange values, previously discussed by Karl Marx. The very "shiny" quality of the phones Ren craves can be read as a reference to one of the characteristics of the simulacrum. When all dealings occur symbolically, with no concrete referential, on another level the simulacrum values the means over content. A contemporary example, mentioned by Marshall MacLuhan in *Understanding media*, lies in modern, high definition TV (11). The quality of image and sound influences consumers to watch whatever is on owing to the attractiveness, light, and mood in the programs, regardless of the content they may or may not be broadcasting, with a final effect of fascination with the media itself.

In HG, identification through commodification takes a step further. In the novel, the children sorted as tributes are themselves the commodities. One of their survival strategies during the Hunger Games is to look loveable or fierce enough to attract sponsors, who will directly affect their performance in the arena with gifts. Such gifts and sponsorship deals are closed not by them, but by mentors, previous victors from their respective district. Advertising in the Hunger Games works largely via product placement, that is, relating one's product with a desirable image of a potentially successful tribute. The more Katniss pleases the audience (simulating love for Peeta, bonding with District 11 tribute Rue), the more she is fetishized and becomes desirable, receiving gifts like medicine. Her personality and attitude will inspire fashion, personalized products and, on occasion, Katniss herself is the product, as are all other tributes.

When describing those workings in Panem, Collins is not detached from current advertising practices. Mentors work like agents, tributes like models, juggling the need to survive and the need to look fabulous and desirable while at it. Shannon Mortimore-Smith (2015) refers to the characteristics that eventually allow Katniss to prevail in the Games:

> Katniss is transformed into the fan favorite, the future rebel leader whose actions unhinge the minds of Panem viewers. Reluctant to play this role, Katniss, spurred on by her cast of mentors, grudgingly accepts that her survival pivots upon fickle public favor. Only by achieving the "gaze" of her sponsors – by evoking the empathy and the bloodlust of her spectators – can Katniss truly triumph. Survival in the Hunger Games, then, depends more on Katniss's ability to fuel a clever deception than to exercise her precision with a bow. (ch. 15)

While Katniss is dealt with and dressed, like she is a product herself, made to look attractive and sell her sponsor's products by association, her actions are seen as two-fold,

allowing her a unique public relations position in Panem. While the Capitol citizens are happy to buy products that associate them with the "girl on fire", attractive, strong and in love, groups of district citizens identify with what they believe to be "the real Katniss", a revolutionary, subversive child who dares to make alliances with weaker tributes and who attempts to deprive the Capitol of their victor by suicide. Eventually, that conflict of images will result in Katniss being also used, now by insurgent District 13, for wartime propaganda. Katniss finds herself amid several referents to her, none of which she fully believes to correspond to her actual self. Her sign value shifts as the plot progresses, hardly ever sharing threads with Katniss's own supposed identity.

Similarly, objects in HG carry sign value on class differences. The mockingjay pin that would later become her symbol is, during the first chapter, a sign of wealth and economic power. It originally belonged to Madge, the mayor's daughter. Made of pure gold, when Katniss glances at it before the reaping, the girl does not think of revolution or of representing her district, but she considers the pin's exchange value. "His eyes land on a small circular pin that adorns her dress. Real gold. Beautifully crafted. It could keep a family in bread for months" (14). Whereas Gale sees her pin as ostentation, Katniss is distracted by how much she and her family could survive by selling it, an evidence that she is aware of sign value in objects, but she refuses to acknowledge it because it would distract her from "real" needs. The mockingjay pin's importance throughout the story shifts towards the symbolic, the sign. It goes from ostentation of wealth to a symbol of District 13, later to be associated strictly with Katniss and herself with the revolution. The line traced by the pin through the chain of signifiers exemplifies how Panem is, too, a society of the simulacrum.

The act of writing goes through a re-signification process in YF, similarly to Madge's pin from HG. At the beginning of the novel, Ren is very clear on the way she

feels about writing. Contrary to the common sense of writing being the best way to record events, usually related to dictionaries, descriptions of language, history or even personal journals, the Gardener cult felt strongly against these notions:

> *Beware of words. Be careful what you write. Leave no trails.*
>
> This is what the Gardeners taught us, when I was a child among them. They told us to depend on memory, because nothing written down could be relied upon. . . . As for writing, it was dangerous, said the Adams and the Eves, because your enemies could trace you through it, and hunt you down, and use your words to condemn you. (6)

Memory, for the Gardeners, was superior to writing. Possibly such a statement can be connected with Atwood's indications, discussed below, that identification happens when one construes the narrative of one's life, and that writing can be reinterpreted, without change in signs (words) from each point in time it is read. This inversion leads to a re-signification of writing: writing as incrimination, writing as liability.

When interviewed for *The Telegraph*, Atwood hinted, "As soon as you have a language that has a past tense and a future tense you're going to say, 'Where did we come from, what happens next?' The ability to remember the past helps us plan the future". The author hints that the very structure of language builds our understanding of ourselves and the world and that such an understanding, with language as its means, has to occur through storytelling.[6] However, Atwood's literature does not consider storytelling exclusive to writing in any way: like Ren's inner monologue and Toby's notes of the saint of the day, in *The Handmaid's Tale*, for instance, Offred's narrative is revealed to occur through recorded tapes.

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[6] This feature of Atwood's literature was further analyzed by Melissa de Sá in her Master's Thesis: "Storytelling as Survival in Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* and *The Year of the Flood*".

Storytelling is, indeed, one of the strongest themes in Atwood's writing, so it is understandable that, even in a story about disaster, narrative would have a significant role. Initially, YF brings an unusual portrayal of writing: in Gardener education, children copied rhymes, the date, and drawings of useful plants on slates, to be wiped immediately afterwards. However, when Ren returns to the Compounds, one of her strategies for adaptation includes writing a personal journal, as it was custom among the girls of her age. Even though she carries the fear of writing into adult life, her attitude is controversial: when infuriated with Jimmy, Ren intentionally leaves her journal next to him, with fragments in which she cursed and insulted him. Instead of having her words used to hurt her, she uses them to hurt Jimmy, or simply to drive him away. Writing, her own story and perspective, goes from a perspective of vulnerability to being a weapon.

In both novels, there are numerous instances of objects being dealt with considering their sign value in detriment of their functional characteristics, their use value. The distribution of tesserae in HG presents itself as an example, distancing the poor from the privileged. Katniss watches the tension between Gale and Madge prior to the reaping:

> But here's the catch. Say you are poor and starving, as we were. You can opt to add your name more times in exchange for tesserae. Each tessera is worth a meagre year's supply of grain and oil for one person. You may do this for your family members as well. . . . So now, at the age of sixteen, my name will be at the reaping twenty times. Gale . . . will have his name forty-two times.
>
> You can see why someone like Madge, who has never been at risk of needing a tessera, can set him off. (15-16)

In Katniss's description, it is possible to notice that the structures for maintaining *status quo* in Panem work not only to ensure the districts' submission to the Capitol, but also to maintain hierarchies of economic power even within the poorest districts. The term "tesserae" does not have a concrete reference, meaning the abstract (its exact measure is not mentioned by Katniss) quantity of grain and oil per person per year. It means survival, more than it means oil and grain; the young narrator refrains from doing so, but she constantly sees sign value.

Additionally to the vagueness of the concept, tesserae also relate to desperation, since families are willing to increase their children's odds of entering the Hunger Games so they do not starve. Its meaning is also relative according to the perspective, since Gale is infuriated to be comforted by Madge's comment that she might be selected for the games. In HG, the characters experience different perspectives of objects and their abstractions, and some of those very abstractions are subverted as the narrative progresses.

In order for that subversion of perspective to happen, as mentioned previously, the specific experiences a character may have are largely relevant. Regarding the concept of tesserae, there are differences not only according to economic status (for instance, between Gale and Madge) but also according to individual characters. There is a constant opposition between Katniss and Gale in terms of political perspective: Gale is enraged at the government, dreams of escaping, and Katniss disregards his feelings as useless, unable to put food in their mouths. Complex depictions of characters are significant devices for literary production, allowing for a sign, a concept or an object to be viewed in several contrasting ways.

For Ren, in YF, her unique experience sends her backwards in relation to the population of the Compounds, whereas vegan cults and street children are portrayed as

exotic and dangerous by mass media and government policies. Ren finds the synthetic fabrics, chemicals, smells, odd. Tom Henthorne, in his second chapter of *Approaching the Hunger Games trilogy: a literary and cultural analysis,* makes a similar point, focusing on Gale's opinion that tesserae are institutionalized on purpose by the state so as to "plant hatred" among citizens (14). Gale and Ren have their opinions influenced by their surroundings; such a portrayal contributes to the structure of both novels.

Like a simulacrum, tesserae are ambivalent in the sense that they have exchange value (the increased risk of being sorted for the Games) and use value (fending off starvation), at least as seen by Katniss in the beginning of the novel, when she is initially blind to a number of symbols of dominance. Collins increasingly works on her main character's sense of symbols throughout the novel, starting with her perception, at the mentioned moment, that tesserae have a type of sign value that she actually chose to ignore up until that moment. The tesserae are not a detached symbol, but they represent social standing within the districts. It is arguable that they cannot be seen as a simulacrum, but they call attention to Katniss's initial perspective of Panem and the signs under which it operates, emphasizing posteriorly her awareness of signs and simulations, because of her change in perspective. The sign value of tesserae is inserted in the previous novel's excerpt to break Madge's simulation of having actual changes of being picked to be a tribute. Evidently, as low as her odds are, and evidencing privilege like they do, we see an ironic inversion in the next scene that constitutes the reaping. Like Madge, Primrose only had her name once for sorting, but hers is the one that is called. The spectacle of odds will be addressed later in this chapter, because it constitutes a different issue, albeit connected with tesserae's sign value.

In both novels, YF and HG, there are several instances that indicate the shift from objects to signs in literature and, particularly, to dystopias. Atwood, probably aware of

the commonplace narrative of people who had contact with extreme cults (be they religious, vegan, among other known cults), common contemporaneous narratives[7] shape Ren's path in the opposite direction. The teenager lives for years with the Gardeners, after her mother ran away from the Compounds pursuing a love affair with Zeb; after their final fight, she rushes back with her child to the Compounds, where Ren is suddenly expected to blend in.

> I was back at the HealthWyzer Compound and I was reunited with my father, just as I used to wish long ago. But nothing felt right. All that faux marble, and the reproduction antique furniture, and the carpets in our house – none of it seemed real. It smelled funny, too – like disinfectant. I missed the leafy smells of the Gardeners, the cooking smells, even the sharp vinegar tang; even the violet biolets. (209)

Ren's sense of reality shifts and the strangeness is now turned to the part of society most similar to our modernity. Her dislocation is also derived from what she deems "the fake flower smell" (209) in the bathtub, calling the reader's attention to the simulation of natural compounds in hygienic products found in the Compounds.

These products point towards another simulacrum: they sell the image of a nature-based hygiene, they promise natural extracts and flowers in them, but those essences undergo extreme chemical treatments that are often synthesized without the promised ingredient. Ren's prior reality, full of earthy and human smells, renders her view of the Compounds unreal; though not explicitly, she is aware of a certain domestication and simulation of nature. The beauty products from the Compounds call her attention to the simulation embedded in the objects she will now use.

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[7] An example of such narratives, released in 2015, is the series *Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt*.

In that sense, the products synthesized chemically render the actual flowers, the actual plants, "unnecessary", much in the same way that Baudrillard marks the "murderous power of images, murderers of the real, murderers of their own model, as Byzantine icons could be those of divine identity" (5). As Crake will conclude when designing the Crakers, the models become irrelevant, while the simulacrum reaches full domination of all interaction with the world and among its elements. The simulacrum is produced and sold, at the same time, as an improvement of referent and as the "real deal", further blurring the line between signs and objects.

Indeed, similar to Baudrillard's use of "worse" when defining the simulacrum, the sermons by Adam One in YF signal the fall of men as a fall towards simulacra. Atwood permeates YF with sermons given by Adam One to the Gardeners, in a tone curiously parodying sacred rites, mixed with the attempt of reconciling science and religion. Although the connection of Atwood with parody is fully addressed in chapter two, a particular sermon by Adam One signals this fall towards simulacra, as described by Toby:

> According to Adam One, the Fall of Man was multidimensional. The ancestral primates fell out of the trees; then they fell from vegetarianism into meat-eating. They fell from instinct into reason, and thus into technology; from simple signals into complex grammar, and thus into humanity . . .
>
> The Fall was ongoing, but its trajectory led ever downward. Sucked into the well of knowledge, you could only plummet, learning more and more, but not getting any happier. (189)

According to Kellner, Baudrillard proposes, in *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, the end of the world of political economy. In his words, "In this era, labor is no longer a force of production, but is itself a 'sign among signs' . . . Labor power is no longer violently

bought and sold; it is designed. . . Production thus joins the consumerist system of signs" (61). Through the example of labor re-signified as a simulacrum, Baudrillard's vision of stages in human paradigms becomes evident.

The emergence of the simulacrum indicates that, "Signs and modes of representation come to constitute 'reality'" (Kellner 63); Adam One's beliefs on the fall of men follow a metaphorical train of thought, resembling Baudrillard's. As the dialectics of signs shifts to the new paradigm, there is a drop in value in human interactions. Although the French philosopher does not elaborate on how the era of signs is worse than the previous one, this hierarchy underlies his theory. Adam One, similarly, points to the fall "from simple signals into complex grammar", after which "you could only plummet" (189). It is rather ironic that Baudrillard's view of the era of signs could be paralleled with a religious view of the fall of humanity. The fact that such threads in common can be found speaks of Atwood's refinement in her construction of a parodied discourse using simulacra.

1.2 The Levels of the Simulacrum and Science Fiction

Throughout Baudrillard's extensive work, there is more than one definition for the simulacrum. Similarly, he claims that there are levels to the different instances of simulacra found in our society. Although they all point to a subversion of the model and its potential freedom from it, simulacra may be categorized into three different levels, according to what they are based on. In *Simulation and Simulacra*, a section is dedicated to the relationship between the three levels of simulacra and science fiction. In order to approach this matter, I briefly review these same levels, discuss the relevance of considering HG and YF as science fiction (though the novels are not restricted to that genre), and comment on the position the novels occupy in the relationship between levels of simulacra and science fiction.

Baudrillard categorizes simulacra, as mentioned previously, according to what they are based on. He defines,

> simulacra that are natural, naturalistic, founded on the image, on imitation and counterfeit, that are harmonious, optimistic, and aim for the restitution or the ideal institution of nature made in God's image,
>
> simulacra that are productive, productivist, founded on energy, force, its materialization by the machine and in the whole system of production . . .
>
> simulacra of simulation, founded on information, the model, the cybernetic game – total operationality, hyperreality, aim of total control. (121)

Baudrillard, then, construes the categories of the simulacrum as a strategy for tracing the connection between humankind and the system of producing copies and dealing with representation, considering operational practices and their intention. His layer analysis is intimately related to modes of production and forms of art.

When he claims the first level, naturalistic, aims at restoring a godlike ideal, this attempt at restoration can be seen in sacred art, particularly during the Renaissance. In a sort of return to the beginning, to Eden, to a heavenly original, all humankind can be seen, at this level, as the simulacrum for the Christian God. People, made in his own image, have distanced themselves from this ideal, harmonious beginning, and art could build the bridge to that return. The second level is traditionally associated with the Industrial Revolution, when humankind becomes the center and the marvels caused by inventions and serial production result in Humanism. The assembly line, with several almost identical products and functions, is a typical image related to this second level of simulacra. The third level is usually associated with the cyberspace, the lack of concrete referential, as signs take on spheres previously dominated by objects and function value.

In an addition to the discussion from the first section of this chapter, the shift from objects to signs in postmodernism can illustrate the same shift from second to third level simulacra.

After defining the three levels of simulacra, Baudrillard proceeds to associate them with narrative genres. Owing to its connection with the concept of ideal, the first level corresponds to utopia, whereas the second level corresponds to "science fiction, strictly speaking" (121). Before addressing Baudrillard's questioning of the possibility of a genre approaching the third level, it is important to point out how the same phrasing is used by Atwood herself, when arguing that her literature cannot be classified as science fiction. In her article, "*The Handmaid's Tale* and *Oryx and Crake* 'In Context'", Atwood bases the divide between science fiction and her label of choice, speculative fiction, on the possibility or not of her stories happening:

> I liked to make a distinction between science fiction proper – for me, this label denotes books with things in them we can't yet do or begin to do, talking beings we can never meet, and places we can't go – and speculative fiction, which employs the means already more or less to hand, and takes place on Planet Earth. (514)

Atwood is aware that other science fiction enthusiasts and theorists believe simply that she does not want to be associated with science fiction. Surely, her reasoning can be problematic if we consider its increased reliance on the notion of possible and impossible not being open to change over time.

Ursula Le Guin, in her review of YF, claims that the *MaddAddam* trilogy is science fiction whether Atwood recognizes it or not, saying, "Who wants to be replaced by people who turn blue when they want sex, so that the men's enormous genitals are blue all the time? Who wants to believe that a story in which that happens isn't science fiction?"

Her point steers the discussion towards the idea that science fiction can be identified by listing narrative futuristic or scientific traits, such as the Crakers and other manipulations of genetic mixtures. In other words, it possibly echoes Darko Suvin's description of science fiction as cognitive estrangement and his definition of *novum*. In that sense, both YF and HG would easily fit the science fiction category: *nova* like technological medication for instant cure, for cosmetic purposes, genetic mutations, and other types of biotechnology are present in the novels.

However, speculative fiction also has a point in reclaiming these novels as its examples. Atwood claimed that this distinction of "the possibility of actually happening" was created by her to avoid "false advertising" (514); she hints that typical science fiction fans would not recognize in her work what they perceived as science fiction themselves. Others have pinned speculative fiction as a subtype of speculative fiction (Glover), but, even among scholars, there is no unanimous definition for the concept. It is related to utopias and dystopias, to the discourse departing from the Other, all the while creating an alternative world that is extrapolated from our contemporary, late 20th century and early 21st century world – all notions that can be found in YF and its related novels.

Atwood sees science fiction, among several other things, as "exploration": the exploration of potential human reactions in the face of contexts that will never happen. Speculative fiction, on the other hand, would transport known human behavior to a future or alternative world. Paradoxically, HG and YF also fit this idea: they both deal with a future that is not too distant from the last hundred years and they approach class and gender conflicts that already exist in the midst of extreme circumstances, be those of the imminent death of the species or an oppressive, spectacle-driven totalitarian government.

Indeed, defining science fiction, even for experts of the field, has proven itself to be challenging. Even though most people can affirm whether a given work is science

fiction or not, it is particularly complex to list characteristics that would separate that type of narrative from the others. As Robert Conquest adequately commented, "To say what is meant by science fiction always leads to a definition which excludes at least something that any s.f. reader would ordinarily include" (34). Initially, there is a notion, by science fiction fans, nearing common sense that s.f. would deal with stories of wonder, in which the readers see themselves in impossible situations whose advances carry an explanation simulating scientific argumentation. They mention time travel, outer space, spaceship battles, robots, invasions, among other contraptions and personages. However, listing the most frequent tropes in science fiction, the case of most iconographic definitions, focused on the description rather than on the theory, comes with severe limitations, since one cannot point out how many of those tropes a work has to use in order to qualify as science fiction.

Darko Suvin proposed that science fiction would be, then, "a genre whose necessary and sufficient conditions are the presence and interaction of estrangement and cognition, and whose main formal device is an imaginative framework alternative to the author's empirical environment" (27). It is possible to argue that Suvin's definition, despite its allusion to Bertold Brecht's concept of estrangement, does not really make use of it; the mention of cognition could be a mere substitute for the word science. However, his merit resides in commenting on the immersion in this other environment, strange but guided and built from a simulation of scientific discourse from the contemporary empirical environment.

He also inserts the concept of *novum* in discussions about science fiction, an estrangement element that creates the environment in the work. Some *nova* may be spaceships, light-speed travel, aliens, among others. Even though authors such as Roberts

may be unsatisfied with his definition of cognitive estrangement, the concept of *novum* influences other attempts of definitions, though there is yet no final word on the matter.

When those considerations are related to HG and YF, the complexity of the issue becomes evident. Saying that YF, for instance, makes use of scientific elements nearly available is problematic in itself, let alone in the difference between Atwood's speculative fiction and science fiction. Following the same argument, that Atwood's genre "takes place on Planet Earth", implies that it may not be possible to have science fiction set on Earth. Similarly, though weapons of mass destruction are already available in very similar technology to the one described in HG, in addition to reality shows with technology providing the audience with infinite angles for entertainment, those same tropes can be seen in *1984*, for example, without harm to the novel's famous label of dystopian science fiction. Similarly to the argument in the Introduction, I chose to work on the novels as dystopias, but they can also be science fiction. In this matter, I tend to agree with Le Guin when she claims that Atwood's novel is science fiction whether she considers it so or not, with the same rationale being extended towards Collins[8].

Baudrillard, on the other hand, does not concern himself with speculative fiction or even the divide between that genre and the one he discusses. He calls science fiction "an unbounded *projection* of the real world of production, but it is not qualitatively different from it" (122). According to the philosopher, as we come to imagine other worlds, we leave the charted, fully mapped world behind. Classic science fiction would, then, be the one about "an expanding universe, besides, it forged its path in the narratives of spatial exploration" (123), but as the fixation of the actual territory occupied by humankind establishes itself, the imaginary lands are extinguished.

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[8] There is no evidence that Collins disagrees with critics on the label, but the argument on Atwood's denial can be extended to her nonetheless, that is, that the author's opinion about the classification of their own literature is not absolute.

After that, the imaginary moves on to spheres that cannot be breached, or at least not yet; "the conquest of space that follows that of the planet is equal to derealizing (dematerializing) human space, or to transferring it into a hyperreal of simulation" (125). As the utopia in the past imagined spaces on the planet and these spaces were charted, writers turned to the imaginary of space. Although the possibility of dominating space is remote, the very construction of these spaces, through imagination, works towards the exhaustion of the theme. The next stage predicted by him would include a third-level narrative.

Such a narrative in science fiction, he argues, would deal in the realm of the hyperreal, without visible barriers between fiction and reality. He claims,

> Without a doubt, the most difficult thing today, in the complex universe of science fiction, is to unravel what still complies (and a large part still does) with the imaginary of the second order, of the productive/projective order, and what already comes from this vagueness of the imaginary, of this uncertainty proper to the third order of simulation. (157).

Typically in his writing style, Baudrillard hardly ever gives examples; his reference to *Crash* is the only one he seems to consider, so to say, science fiction of the third level. The intricacy of his argument increases the difficulty of defining exactly what can be said to fit that category; the discussion whether HG and YF can be said to be third-level science fiction according to Baudrillard is an attempt to shed some light on the matter.

With regard to HG, simulation and the manipulation of the real in general is one of its main themes. Characters' opinions and memories are hardly ever reliable, even Katniss's; characters are often victims of sensationalist representations of history, of the state, even of love and patriotism. In the same way Katniss cannot trust the Gamemakers to broadcast the entirety of her experience in the Games, she cannot trust her own

memories, altered and stretched by tracker-jacker venom[9]. Even in the books that follow HG, *Catching Fire* and *Mockingjay*, reality drifts farther into the unknown, the strongest example being Peeta's brainwashed version of himself after being tortured by the Capitol.[10]

This kidnapping of history and of personal memories, particularly the manipulation of district citizens via desperate broadcasts calling for a cease-fire, can be gauged as a trait seen in third-level science fiction. However, HG cannot be defined by being entirely third level because the novel is still guided by one unifying voice, Katniss's. Her storytelling puts everything together, occasionally signals the unreliable fragments, organizes the narrative in time and space, though not completely. There is, then, a structure of simulation in HG, effective on a bigger part of the population, but the reader – through Katniss's eyes – has an experience that is nearly unified about Panem. As a result, HG does not fully qualify as second level either, since the novel does not deal simply with the possibilities of production, or of projected advances, but presents blurs between fiction and reality.

As for YF, there is a similar result through different devices; there is no unifying force in YF. The narrative is filled with blanks, it disobeys chronology and it is seen mainly through two characters, Toby and Ren. The lack of unification results in more perspectives that may enter into conflicted, relativizing reality. However, owing to Toby's and Ren's personal reasons for telling their respective stories, their account is more reliable than Katniss's. They are subject to less manipulation, of state, corporations or such. One could argue that the Gardener cult shapes their thinking, but neither fails to question those values when there is need.

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[9] The tracker-jacker is a sort of bioengineered wasp whose poison causes hallucinations and even kills in high doses.

[10] His trauma results in the catchphrase "Real or not real?" that will be further analyzed in section 1.4.

Indeed, the very status of simulation in YF is dubious, since the characters deal with the end of nearly all human civilization, that is, the end of mass media, of state; they gradually revert to basic survival needs. Considering YF as third level science fiction seems, then, incorrect. However, the themes of bioengineering, of the post-human, along with the remains of mass media that still permeate their actions and their form of storytelling still point at a break with models that is connected to the hyperreal. As a result, YF cannot be fully considered third-level science fiction either.

There can be several reasons for HG and YF to stand in this middle ground between the second and the third levels of simulation. The very conflict between science and speculative fiction is involved, given that the writers approach issues already present in society to create their extrapolation. By doing so, their novels are partially anchored in the "real", that is, in the contemporary experience that, even though it leans towards the extinction of models and signifiers, it still has connections with the concrete, with use value, and still attempt absolute truth, regardless of its success or not.

Another reason for the novels to be in that middle ground is that science fiction itself is not a stable category. The novels present what Suvin would consider *nova*, but one can argue that the problems they undergo are essentially human, emotional, "un-scientific". However, HG and YF may indicate a direction for science fiction not to stabilize itself, but to proceed further into this break with conventions and with absolute truths. It is possible that Baudrillard predicted a type of science fiction that is yet to be reached, but HG and YF are examples that his guesses are not entirely devoid of accuracy.

1.3 The simulacrum and media: retroalimentation and the panopticon

Among the spheres in which simulacra become more evident or self-explanatory, mass media deserve particular emphasis. My choice in theory for approaching mass media

is through Douglas Kellner's works on Media Culture. In this subsection, I draw convergences between Baudrillard's simulacrum, Media Culture, instruments of power and, when necessary, Foucault's panopticon in my analysis of structures of simulation carried out in mass media and the way they affect not just the construction of characters, but the structural shape of HG and YF.

In his initial definition of Media Culture, Kellner focuses on the audiovisual essence of television, radio, film, or even newspapers of magazines, all of which contribute to a "culture of the image" (*Media Culture*, 1) and manipulate a game of ideologies and emotions on its target audience. According to him,

> Media culture is industrial culture, organized on the model of mass production and is produced for a mass audience according to types (genres), following conventional formulas, codes, and rules. It is thus a form of commercial culture and its products are commodities that attempt to attract private profit produced by giant corporations interested in the accumulation of capital. Media culture aims at a large audience, thus it must resonate to current themes and concerns, and is highly topical, providing hieroglyphics of contemporary social life. (1)

Kellner, like Baudrillard, is influenced by and often a critic of Marxism, all the while using some of its concepts.

It is important to note that mass media will not be analyzed, in this thesis, from the perspective of the communicator, that is, of those in charge of the codes and broadcasts. Instead, it focuses on those subjected to it, no matter how passive or not that subjection may be. Mass media, in this thesis, are related to how thoughts and values are shaped in the common citizen, their reception and their level of unquestioned acceptance, and their manipulation of simulacra to that end.

Arguably, such a perspective is famous for a certain demonization of mass media, choosing to deny its reasonably positive traits of information distribution and facilitation of communication; however, I attempt to abstain from value judgment. I recognize these positive traits, but will not be addressing them on this occasion. Like Kellner, I consider Media Culture to hold command over models and their procreation, representing reality in different, but never random, ways. Its intentionality is also not in question, but the final effect produced on characters, readers, franchise fans, among others.

In addition to the aforementioned problems in selective representation, Marilena Chauí discusses the role of mass media in maintaining or establishing values. She also comments on a shift, typical of Brazilian journalism but not exclusive to it, from telling facts to asking about opinions during interviews or live programs:

> It is not accidental that news programs, in radio and television, when promoting interviews in which the news piece is mixed with those direct or indirectly involved in the case, there is always a reporter asking someone, "What did/do you feel about it?", or "What did/do you think of that?" . . . Interviewees are not asked what they *think* or *reckon* of events, but their feelings, whether something pleases or displeases them. (6, translation mine, my emphasis)

Chauí believes that such a relativization of experiences and events contributes to a subjective portrayal that loses objectivity and caters more to the audience's cathartic needs than to their informational ones. Asking about feelings instead of their accounts of facts may sound like a slight change, since all experience is relative. However, feelings cannot be disputed, whereas facts can undergo debate and be further elaborated. Transforming a news broadcast into an emotional event can be seen as a construction of the simulacrum, since a "real" event is reduced to feelings and personal impressions that

do not represent the event, much less inform the public impartially, as often marketed by mass media corporations.

Indeed, Marshall McLuhan, in *Understanding Media,* summarizes the relationship between the simulacrum and Media Culture with "The medium is the message" (7). In his claim, McLuhan points at a tendency of mass media of selling formats (reality shows, interviews, news programs) whose content is seemingly irrelevant. That does not mean that there is no content, but that content, or the message, is not the priority or the reason for mass communication to exist. If we remember Kellner, this so-called content is no more than small variations in formulas and codes, resulting in a sense of variety that is illusory, much similar to having dozens of brands of yogurt that amount to the same product with small variations – variety is a simulation within a fixed formula.

Mass media insert in their usual codes variations that are construed to be an impartial representation of reality. The result is a warped reality sold daily both as entertainment and as information, even though it may bear small or no resemblance to a viewer's "reality". I use the term in quotes here because of the multiplicity of meanings in the concept of reality, to be set by each individual. Mass media, then, sell simulacra as entertainment, or, like Kellner comments in *Media Spectacle*, infotainment, a concept related to the phenomenon of transforming news events into spectacles, dramatic narratives, for the amusement of the public (*Media Spectacle*, 1).

Chauí lists, among the effects of mass media on artworks and philosophy, "1. Of becoming reproductive and repetitive, instead of expressive; 2. Of going from a work of creation to events for consumerism; 3. Of going from experiments of the new to consecrations of fashion establishments and consumerism" (21, translation mine). All of these effects have a lot in common with Baudrillard's simulacrum because these

variations in formulas do not refer to anything outside the system of rule variations. Soap opera tropes refer to other soap operas, all the while claiming to reflect, for instance, the life of a typical citizen from Rio de Janeiro. Mass media come to shape the collective mentality via this endless repetition of formulas sold as vividly accurate, but marked with the same "shiny" and "fake" quality that Ren sees in the bathing products from the Compounds.

In HG, all information is sent to the poorer districts via television. In a striking resemblance to Orwell's *1984*, all citizens must watch the Hunger Games, that is, the screens must be on at the time of the broadcast. Similarly, all citizens of the district must attend the reaping, unless on their deathbed (9), meaning that participation in the spectacle of the games is compulsory for more than one reason. From Katniss's narration, the reader learns that the reaping and the Games themselves are the only trace of history that the Capitol allows to be known. Since the novel starts, before the 74th edition of the show, there are no survivors from the establishment of that system of government; citizens of District 12 only have the television and their Capitol-approved education to account for how Panem came to be.

Indeed, the Capitol's kidnapping of history is part of the mandatory spectacle. Before the children are sorted, the mayor has the duty to remind the population of the reasons for their current miserable life:

> It's the same story every year. He tells the story of Panem, the country that rose up out of the ashes of a place that was once called North America. He lists the disasters, the droughts, the storms, the fires, the encroaching seas that swallowed up so much of the land, the brutal war for what little sustenance remained. The result was Panem, a shining Capitol ringed by thirteen districts, which brought peace and prosperity to its citizens. Then

came the Dark Days, the uprising of the districts against the Capitol.

Twelve were defeated, the thirteenth obliterated. The Treaty of Treason

gave us the new laws to guarantee peace and, as our yearly reminder that

the Dark Days must never be repeated, it gave us the Hunger Games. (21)

According to the Capitol, then, the rest of the continent and, allegedly, all the rest of the

planet was destroyed by natural disasters. However, Katniss has no way of verifying that

story because of her status in Panem. She does not seem to fully believe in it, but her

initial stance on the matter is, as mentioned previously, indifferent, since the knowledge

of the history of Panem would not feed her and her family.

This lack of specificity in how a dystopian society came to be is, indeed, very

common in the genre. Some of them give the impression of having "always been this

way", such as *1984*, or others faintly describe an outsider threat, like the attacks attributed

to Islam in Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* that justified a military coup. HG, like *The

Handmaid's Tale* and *Brave New World*, is presented by the powerful as a society with

"necessary evils" but "ultimately for the good of all". Reshaping and selling partial

history to construe a narrative that defends the *status quo* requires simulacra for the

adjustment of pieces that do not (or may not, when confirmation is impossible)

correspond to concrete referents. That is, what actually happened cannot be reached.

Concerning YF, history is elusive and fragile. The ultra-capitalist structure of the

state and the destruction of several animal species are all represented as being a

consequence of contemporary society. However, the form of calculating time is a clue

that some radical change must have taken place. When the waterless flood takes place, it

is the Year 25, meaning that the Gardener cult began at year 0, but there is no indication

of traditional ways of recording time. Atwood is famous for writing among blanks,

leaving out information and rendering it impossible to build a linear and reasonable story

of transformations in society. YF, as a dystopia, is ambiguous. It is presented at the same time as a structure that has already been destroyed and as a brutally unequal structure, owing to the lack of chronological order in the narrative.

The world where Toby lives, up to the moment she goes into hiding under the name Tobiatha, was inherently diseased, characterizing an ultra-capitalist dystopia. After the waterless flood, though, the characters face a type of post-apocalypse. YF presents two adverse scenarios in a single novel, ironically without value judgments from characters, except Glenn/Crake, the person responsible for releasing the biological agent that causes the flood:

> This was not an ordinary pandemic: it wouldn't be contained after a few hundred thousand deaths, then obliterated with biotools and bleach. This was the Waterless Flood the Gardeners so often had warned about. It had all the signs: it travelled through the air as if on wings, it burned through cities like fire, spreading germ-ridden mobs, terror, and butchery. The lights were going out everywhere, the news was sporadic: systems were failing as their keepers died. (20)

In YF, then, history may be as recent as in HG, but it is much more personal and left to what each character experiences. The contrast is also visible in the relationship Toby and Katniss have with mass media: whereas Katniss's sense of state, organization and discipline are fed by screens that are constantly lit, ceremonies in which she must play a part, Toby resorts to personal narrative when mass media cease to exist, since "systems were failing as their keepers died". Paradoxically, Toby (and Ren) is informed of the severity of the virus by the absence of news programs.

Toby's previous experience, indeed, taught her to mistrust mass media. After both her parents die, her father of a suicide, she must hide his body and his rifle, since weapons

had been outlawed. She would have to flee to escape interrogation and other consequences by the CorpSeCorps. However, there is not much of a search for her afterwards. "The CorpSeCorps always substituted rumour for action, if action would cost them anything. They believed in the bottom line." (28-9) She knows, therefore, that it was not good business for the corporations to actually look for her, so they would suggest she became a prostitute and ran away with a man, less hard work for them.

Ren learns the same lesson when her father, a top scientist in the HealthWyzer Compound, is kidnapped by a rival corporation, and Lucerne is told that paying his ransom was not worth his knowledge or life:

> they'd decided the disease germs and formulas were worth more to them than Frank was. As for the adverse publicity, they could squelch it at source, since the media Corps controlled what was news and what wasn't. And the Internet was such a jumble of false and true factoids what no one believed what was on it anymore, or else they believed all of it, which amounted to the same thing. (293)

Since the CorpSeCorps are the closest thing to a government in the universe of the *MaddAddam* trilogy, they operate like a form of state, even though boundaries do not seem as strict as in the past. There are still references to countries and continents, but no explicit mention of the United States or Canada as a setting. The CorpSeCorps work their boundaries in the form of Compounds; they build gated communities for the rich, commanding their exposure to news, entertainment and consumption. Ren remarks in her story that, since the official news was subject to whatever interests the corporations had, any other attempt at reaching "truth" was futile owing to the multiplicity of "facts" on the Internet. Much the same way the news constitutes simulacra of the reality both inside and

outside Compound gates, stories and versions are exchanged on the Internet as equals, regardless of any reference to daily, concrete life.

Considering this kidnapping of History, the absence of trustworthy sources for information, HG and YF operate differently, though similarly, in the construction of unreliable perspectives of the past and of events broadcast by mass media. In HG, we have characters whom are not only fed those models and rules, but they are also forced into participation. Indeed, the passive indignation from most of the population and Gale's wishes for revolution and struggle set up dialogue with Marx and Engels' argument that capitalist society would eventually be destroyed by a revolution from the lower, working classes. Such a dialogue deepens the atmosphere of an oppressed portion of society by military and mass media imposition. Citizens are sold the idea of the Hunger Games as a "reminder", as an "exercise of patriotism". In YF, on the other hand, characters are left to fend for themselves, both before and after the waterless flood, and the disappearance of media influence actually communicates the indisputable truth of the devastation on the planet.

Another theme both novels share is vigilance. Vigilance, as a concept, is not necessarily a simulacrum. On the other hand, the possibility of vigilance produces an effect on some characters in both novels, that is, they continue to act for the cameras whether or not they are being watched. This performance, then, is the result of a durable exposition to the formulas of mass media, producers of simulacra, enacting an effect that strongly resembles Jeremy Bentham's panopticon and, more importantly, Michel Foucault's analysis of it.

The English philosopher, whose work currently inspires the Bertham Project at University College London, is famous for his theory of government and of ways for maintaining discipline, assuming that some form of punishment would always be

necessary to establish order (Semple, 37).[11] He proposed what some call the ideal prison, a circular building with a central tower, in which an inspector would be able to watch any prisoner at any given time without being seen himself. As Foucault describes it, in *Discipline and Punish*, its main result is "to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power" (201), which would lead not only to stable order inside the prison, but also change behavior for good. In addition, the cells in Foucault's discussion of Bertham's panopticon are built in such a way that prisoners are visible for the inspector through backlighting, but opaque walls separate them from other inmates, thus avoiding communication and conspiracy by them.

There has been controversy concerning the relationship between Bertham's state philosophy and Foucault's analysis of power and punishment, as Anne Brunon-Ernst comments in the introduction to *Beyond Foucault: New Perspectives on Bentham's Panopticon*. She points out that both Bertham and Foucault come to interpret the panopticon differently in later works and that Bertham's memory was somewhat demonized for his initial plan of the panopticon. Janet Semple, in "Bertham's Haunted House", agrees and claims that the problem approached by the English philosopher was quite another one, during a time whose demands were different. While Bertham devised a prison system that aimed at reducing necessary staff and resources, Foucault saw it as a metaphor for instruments for discipline and exercising power. Although these perspectives are not mutually exclusive, they do touch on different views on vigilance.

The panopticon has already been related to HG, by Kelley Wezner, in "'Perhaps I'm watching you now': Panem's panopticons". She highlights structural panopticons, such as the very structure of the thirteen districts surrounding the Capitol, laid on higher ground. Arenas are also constant reminders of that sense of vigilance, in which the tributes

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[11] Available at: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/Bentham-Project/journals/newsletter_11>. Accessed on: Nov. 16th 2015.

are prisoners suffering the most important effect mentioned previously. In Wezner's words, "Because the tributes in the Hunger Games are subjected to heightened surveillance and spectacles of punishment, the Games' mentality of distrust, suspicion, and paranoia best illustrates the psychological effects of the panopticon" (ch. 14). She proceeds to point out that the so-called sacrifice of the tributes for their respective districts is exemplary, a statement of power. As Katniss herself comments, "this is the Capitol's way of reminding us how totally we are at their mercy. How little chance we would stand of surviving another rebellion" (22). I would add that the propaganda and the formulas fed to district children during their formative years eventually function as the walls of the panopticon that prevent communication among prisoners.

As potential tributes, children are taught to distrust other districts, to see them as killers, whenever they have a chance. Each district's system of communication is connected to the Capitol, that is, they do not communicate with each other. Indeed, district children must not even trust the other gender: immediately after Peeta's name is picked to participate in the Games, Katniss regrets having to compete with him because she owes him her life. Years before, Peeta, who was a perfect stranger, gave her a loaf of bread when she was at the brink of starvation[12]. However, her conflict dissipates when she sees him as a threat, using his charisma and way with words to captivate the audience and the sponsors. Throughout her journey in the Games, she struggles with her desire to trust Peeta and her awareness that only one survives the reality show.

Painball, in YF, resembles the Games both in behavior conditioning and in the spectacularization of violence. As described by Toby, Painball was a place, a kind of arena enclosed in a forest, in which criminals were divided into two teams, with a meagre supply of food left to them in order that they fend for themselves. Contestants, or

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[12] Her initial conflict is summarized in, "Exactly how am I supposed to work in a thank-you in there? Somehow it just won't seem sincere if I'm trying to slit his throat" (39).

criminals, would also receive a gun that shot paint, but that was capable of causing serious harm, depending on which part of the body it hit: "a hit in the eyes would blind you, and if you got the paint on your skin you'd start to corrode" (98). Interestingly, the competition was not always out in the open: "but now, it was said, you could watch it onscreen. There were cameras in the Painball forest . . . but often there wasn't much to see except a leg or a blurry shadow" (98). Though survivors of Painball did not become instant millionaires, they regained their freedom, which cannot be disregarded as a prize, since their only other option was to accept being "spraygunned" to death for their crimes. Not only does YF feature gruesome murders as entertainment and spectacle, like HG, but the praise to violence and horrific deaths, along with the sense of being watched, is embedded in most criminals who eventually survive Painball. "Some got hooked on the adrenaline and didn't want to leave when their time was up" (98), Toby comments, in her explanation of the game, right after hearing that Blanco, her former boss and abuser, had been sent to Painball.

Atwood will later use behavioral changes to construe Toby's fear as a survival drive, shown by her constant fear of meeting him by chance on the street. Ren, locked inside a secure area of the strip club where she works, watches as the so-called Painballers destroy the facility and kill all staff, except her (281). Painballers embody violence, though not animality: even though violence and animal instinct are often related, in YF animal instinct is more personified in the bees Toby takes care of, in her own survival instincts, and in the relationship with mutant pigs that attempt to wait for her to die of hunger. "It would be back to Painball for them – they should never have been let out, not ever" (281), comments Ren, when she is left alone and locked inside the club, Scales and Tails. Although she is not touched by the Painballers, she understands the threat they represent, despite the lack of a trauma like Toby's.

It is possible to note that Foucault's panopticon is more relevant to the analysis of behavioral modification and vigilance forms, both for entertainment and power statements in the novels, even though it is highly influenced by Bertham's description of the ideal prison. The ramifications of that state of surveillance in the late 20th and early 21st century involve state control of information and behavioral manipulations of those considered insurgent or subversive. More importantly, these ramifications can be seen as roots for the merge between information and entertainment discussed by Kellner.

From the surveillance of criminals to the surveillance of willing subjects for fun, with the claim of a higher statement towards a human essence, Bertham's panopticon was expanded in modernism and postmodernism, influencing forms of art and media. At the same time, the panopticon is a distant model, whose meaning was shifted and resignified in order to deal with other meanings such as reality shows: Hunger Games, Painball or even the actual television show Big Brother. Surveillance ceased to be a tool of the state to become a tool of mass media. Regardless of those mass media broadcasting values that interest the state or not, surveillance becomes a source of entertainment instead of a strategy for effective punishment.

Despite that inversion, we can still see how surveillance affects behavior when it is absent, or when the subject is unaware of their status in the cameras. Much like Bertham's hypothetic prisoners come to behave appropriately since they can be seen at any moment without their knowledge, Atwood's and Collins' characters are affected by the idea that they can be watched at any time. In addition, that status of constant, fluid surveillance comes to change their perception of reality; the simulacrum of the panopticon affects their perspective.

That sense of blurriness of reality derived from mass media manipulation can be found throughout the novels, but two more instances are provided here in order to keep

the discussion concise. When Ren is locked inside Scales and Tails, hoping to be rescued by Amanda, she watches as the news first shows a major epidemic that decimates entire continents. At first she is surprised that the story actually reaches news broadcasts saying, "Ordinarily the Corps would have called for lies and cover-ups, and we'd hear something like the real story only in rumours, so the fact that all this was right out there on the news showed how serious it was – the Corps couldn't put a lid on" (282-83). The inversion in this excerpt indicates that characters were aware of the manipulation carried out by mass media, accustomed to the fiction they usually provided.

In HG, there are two main instances showing this subversion: after Katniss becomes Rue's ally inside the arena and the girl from District 11 is brutally killed, she decorates her body before it is taken by the Gamemakers. In order to, as the narrator herself claims, "shame them, to make them accountable" (286), Katniss covers Rue's body in flowers. However, she suspects that her ritual will not be shown, aware as she is that their surveillance is selective: "They'll have to show it. Or, even if they choose to turn the cameras elsewhere at this moment, they'll have to bring them back when they collect the bodies and everyone will see her then and know I did it" (287). The excerpt is not clear on the exact meaning of "everyone", that is, the reader is left unsure whether she wants to send a message to the viewers or the Gamemakers, but it is certain that the message is only sure to reach the latter.

Finally, the second and obvious example of behavioral manipulation as tools for deception of some, and entertainment of most, can be seen in the events following the end of the Games. When Katniss raises a handful of poison berries and gives Peeta half the portion, her narration describes feelings of revolt, willing as she is to deny the Capitol a victor. However, once both of them are declared victors, their mentor has to prepare them for an entirely new simulation they will have to enact.

> Listen up. You're in trouble. Word is the Capitol's furious about you showing them up in the arena. The one thing they can't stand is being laughed at, and they're the joke of Panem . . .
>
> Your only defense can be you were so madly in love you weren't responsible for your actions. (433)

That simulation of love, mandatory for Katniss, will set the tone of the following novel, *Catching Fire*. Their sense of surveillance and the rules of mass media will continue to guide the trilogy as a theme, which can be an interesting approach to further studies. However, since the performance begins in HG, it is possible to say that, towards the end, Katniss and Peeta master the rules of the media and bend them towards their own protection, they end up exerting behavior manipulation. I do not call this practice a simple pretense because that simulation confuses the characters, who are left unsure if they are performing feelings they felt the entire time or if the simulation caused the feelings to surface.

In *Simulacra and Simulation*, Baudrillard discusses the end of the panopticon with reality television. His example, the Loud family, consists of uninterrupted footage of the daily life in a North American household. The French philosopher seems most disturbed by the paradox created by a type of slogan that is used to this day: things were filmed "as if the camera crew was not there" so that viewers felt like they were there themselves. He claims, "it is not a question of secrecy or perversion, but a sort of frisson of the real, or of an aesthetics of the hyperreal" (28), implying that such a format leads to the commonplace being praised by filming. Those who were supposed to be invisible and meaningless come to be seen as innovative, creative, producers of good entertainment; their invisibility becomes a type of commodity for entertainment.

Reality TV would carefully choose model participants, as it happened with the Loud family (middle class, couple with children, and so on), and sell them as the model; "Such is the watershed of a hyperreal sociality, in which the real is confused with the model" (29). It is arguable that Painball does not serve the direct purpose of broadcasting model citizens; instead, it sells model punishment. Similarly, in the Hunger Games, the tributes are a reminder, but they are also turned into models of virtue, to feed the districts with hope and admiration for those "representing" them. As Bertham's panopticon is seen from different perspectives, Foucault's in particular, it changes. It becomes a simulacrum in itself; it is subject to the formulas and purposes of mass media. The issue of revolution is not up for debate at this point, but the pervading force that simulacra enact on their reception and manipulation of mass media formulas. In YF, that perception is more solid, as previously seen, but more skeptical.

1.4 Simulacrum and experience – the real and the mediated, nostalgia, simulation

Baudrillard's theory of simulation relies strongly on the ideas of mediation, models and their manipulations. The idea of reality, paradoxically, is axiomatic to the point where reality is a simulacrum within itself, since people cannot fully perceive their surroundings, cannot fully understand their experience and even communication among humans is debatable. If the reality we are accustomed to is already mediated by the senses, it is understandable how further mediation, no matter its source, is discomforting to some subjects.

Other instances of mediation experience, as mentioned previously, are elements of the hyperreal that, according to Baudrillard again, expand their grip on daily routines. As Kellner puts it, "For Baudrillard, the hyperreal is not the unreal but the more than real, the realer than real" (82). In the face of such a "model invasion", everything is

commanded by codes and models: "Everyday life thus becomes more and more hyperreal as hair, teeth, fingernails, food, flowers, grass and houses constitute a new hyperreality that is 'more than real'." (83) Instead of hyperreality being in some superior layer of existence, it has direct acting elements on daily life.

Again, it is important to note that Baudrillard is not immune to value judgment. Kellner accurately points that he insists that technology, media and other elements of hyperreality are negative influences for humankind:

> Baudrillard . . . reveals both technophobia and a nostalgia for face-to-face conversation which he privileges (as authentic communication) over debased and abstract media communication. Such a position creates a binary dichotomy between "good" face-to-face communication and "bad" media communication, and thus occludes the fact that interpersonal communication can be just as manipulative, distorted, reified and the rest as media. (67)

The reason this section argues for simulation occurring also among personal stories shared by characters comes from my agreement with Kellner's remarks. Certainly, they are not considered to be equal because interpersonal communication can hardly contribute to the hyperreal. It can, however, produce simulations that may alter one's sense of reality, further mediating a character's experience with his/her surroundings.

The production of simulation by characters can be seen, primarily, in YF, when Lucerne decides to return to the Compounds with Ren. After a particularly fierce fight with Zeb, she rips a part of Ren's dress, produces a disheveled look, claiming that their identities were stolen years before:

> She said it wasn't the fault of the cult itself — it was one of the male members who'd been obsessed with her and wanted her for his personal

sex slave, and had taken away her shoes to keep her captive. This was supposed to be Zeb, though she said she didn't know his name. I'd been too young to realize what was going on, she said, but I'd been a hostage — she'd had to do the bidding of this madman, service his every twisted whim, it was revolting the things he'd made her do — or my life would have been in danger. (211)

Because Ren actively saw what her mother was doing since they left the Compounds, she has no problem denying the story in her own head. However, Lucerne does not treat her as an accomplice at any point: even when the two are alone, Lucerne insists that Ren had no idea about what was really going on and that she had simply been trying to protect her child. On the other hand, the story does the job to all other individuals involved: Ren's father takes them back and the Compound guards have no problem letting them in once they are recognized. Lucerne uses common symbols to create her simulation – a madman, a devoted mother, the cruelty of the Pleeblands – and provides the Compounds with a different reality.

A similar ensemble takes place when Katniss decides to feign love for Peeta. As mentioned in the Introduction, she realizes that broadcasting herself as a young girl in love could protect her far more than scaring other tributes away. While the public's sympathy could win her gifts from sponsors, looking threatening could attract an early attack from other tributes. Upon posterior reflection, she comments, "But now Peeta has made me an object of love. Not just his. To hear him tell it, I have many admirers. And if the audience really thinks we are in love… I remember how strongly they responded to his confession . . . Haymitch is right, they eat that stuff up in the Capitol" (165). At this point, Peeta's declaration already tipped the scales. It is not an instance of simulation yet, though.

While the audience is highly entertained by the idea of "star-crossed lovers" who have to kill one another, nobody inside the Games is fooled in the slightest. In that sense, Katniss is not properly producing the "symptoms", that is, she is not Baudrillard's Litté, mentioned in Section 1.1. For a large extent of the plot, Katniss only manipulates media codes in order to make part of the audience believe she loves Peeta back. Even after Katniss's simulation starts confusing her own notion of what she may feel for Peeta, there are always challenging parties, such as President Snow or district rebels. Once Katniss and Peeta are reunited, still during the Games, she proceeds to display as much affection as she can muster. At some point, the "symptoms" she fakes, allegedly for an audience, seep through her own perception: "And while I was talking, the idea of actually losing Peeta hit me again and I realized how much I don't want him to die. And it's not about the sponsors. It's not about what happened at home . . . It's him. I do not want to lose the boy with the bread" (362). Katniss's relationship with Peeta enters a blurry area, in which neither actually knows the extent to which the other may be faking; regardless, Katniss realizes that she is no longer certain of how she feels towards him.

This romantic simulation is particularly conflicting because it affects her peers, the audience and the Gamemakers differently. Even when Katniss experiences confusion, a number of characters are not convinced. Such a divide could mean a break with simulation. On the other hand, in YF, Lucerne's story is told through Ren's perspective and it still is an effective simulation. If we consider these characters' simulations, we can conclude that simulation is minimally effective if there is an end being met: Litté succeeds in being treated as a sick man, Lucerne succeeds in returning to the Compounds as a victim and a caring mother, Katniss succeeds in attracting enough sponsors, part of the audience and, occasionally, in making Peeta himself believe she might have feelings for him.

There are expressions of simulation in both novels that do not necessarily constitute an intentional deception. Concerning YF, once again, Toby's experience with the Gardeners, followed by her rise as Eve Six, is not the result of "creating symptoms". After Adam One and the other Gardeners receive her, she struggles with the opinion that their beliefs are somewhat laughable opposed to her gratitude that pushes her towards the cult. Indeed, she is also troubled by her lack of agency; when she arrives at the Garden, Adam One expresses his happiness with her "decision": "But Toby didn't think she made any decision at all" (43). A recurring theme during her conversations with Rebecca and Pilar is the culture shock she experiences. She asks Rebecca if she did not miss hamburgers and she occasionally confesses to Pilar she has trouble believing their dogmas. Although she is grateful, there is no intention of representing herself as faithful to cause deception.

However, after Pilar dies, and even before that, Toby is approached by Adam One, interested in giving her a "promotion". When she confesses to not being a real believer, he responds,

> "In some religions, faith precedes action," said Adam One. "In ours, action precedes faith. You've been acting as if you believe, dear Toby. *As if* – those two words are very important to us. …
>
> Adam One sighed. "We should not expect too much from faith," he said. "Human understanding is fallible, and we see through a glass, darkly. Any religion is a shadow of God. But the shadows of God are not God." (168)

This excerpt is extremely relevant, for it condenses several important elements of this thesis. Among many of Adam One's contradictions stands the idea that "action precedes faith". His statement leads to the conclusion that Toby is not the only one feigning belief;

indeed, there is a good chance that Adam One himself, as a preacher, may be a performer/pretender. Paradoxically, his eloquence relies not on religious values, but on very material ones. By acknowledging that human perception is mediated throughout by human senses (among several other things), he indicates that total faith might be the deception, reaching his conclusion that action is more important than certainties, no matter the subject.

Adam One recognizes the role of mediation in human perception; the conflict between the sense of the real and the mediated is often expressed in both novels. When Adam One claims that religions are a shadow of deities, his argument meets Baudrillard's opinion on icon adorers, "whom one accuses of disdaining and denying images, were those who accorded them their true value, in contrast to the iconoclasts who only saw reflections in them and were content to venerate a filigree God" (5). Surely, Adam One expresses the same disapproval of the reign of signs as Baudrillard does, since both of them believe icons (signs) should not substitute deities (signifiers).

Baudrillard considers utopia to work in the opposite sense of simulation. In his words, "Simulation, on the contrary, stems from the utopia of the principle of equivalence, *from the radical negation of the sign as value*, from the sign as reversion and death sentence of every reference" (6, emphasis on original). That opposition leads to the conclusion that utopia is prone to hierarchy, including the role of the sign with concrete references. In this sense, it seems that dystopia would, then, be a form of fiction that is closer to simulation. However, this claim is supported by the fragile assumption that dystopia is the contrary of utopia. It is, then, much more possible that dystopia, particularly in the case of science fiction dystopias, problematizes the role of the sign in their societies.

In dystopia studies, there is a number of authors and critics analyzing the way dystopias lie within utopias and vice-versa; among them, Atwood herself discusses the issue around the term ustopia. "*Ustopias* is a word I made up by combining utopia and dystopia — the imagined perfect society and its opposite—because, in my view, each contains a latent version of the other," (ch. 1) she claims. These versions are not limited to the level of the plot:

> Dystopias are usually described as the opposite of utopias—they are Great Bad Places rather than Great Good Places and are characterized by suffering, tyranny, and oppression of all kinds. . . .within each utopia, a concealed dystopia; within each dystopia, a hidden utopia, if only in the form of the world as it existed before the bad guys took over. Even in Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* – . . . utopia is present, though minimally, in the form of an antique glass paperweight and a little woodland glade beside a stream. (ch. 1)

The idea that both utopias and dystopias share the issue of enabling the narration itself – how the narrative could have come to be – and the hope of this escape points towards a complementary relationship between utopia and dystopia. As a result, dystopia cannot be the fictional expression of the revolution of signs. Hope, as Rafaela Baccolini points out, constitutes this break with that same revolution, be it towards a restoration or towards a new order.

In direct terms, Baccolini concludes her paper on "The Persistence of Hope in Science Fiction", after elaborating on critical dystopias, with

> Instead of providing some compensatory and comforting conclusion, the critical dystopia's open ending leaves its characters to deal with their choices and responsibilities. It is in the acceptance of responsibility and

accountability, often worked through memory and the recovery of the past,

that we bring the past into a living relation with the present and may thus

begin to lay the foundations for Utopian change. (521)

As said previously, such hope of restoration or the establishment of a new order functions as a common drive for characters in dystopia. Admittedly, hope points towards the external, towards the possible; it exists in the minds of readers and in a character's drives as signs only. However, the same symbolic hope sets the impulse to seek concrete, referential change. The contrast between Baudrillard's comment on utopias and contemporary critics of dystopia leads to the conclusion that yes, dystopia handles signs at large, but those signs relate to each other, often resulting in a hope for signs with referential connection. The open endings mentioned by Baccolini, so common in critical dystopias, do not answer whether that same hope was concretized or not, unsurprisingly.

Examples of these relationships can be seen in YF, when Lucerne seeks restoration through simulation when she returns with Ren to the Compounds, or in the Gardener faith itself, believing that the Fall of men was a fall towards simulacra. In HG, Panem is symbolically restored at the end of every Hunger Games, as if the war was ending again, with a victorious Capitol. When Katniss becomes Rue's ally inside the Games, she is aware that, in her best possible scenario, she would eventually be forced to kill Rue. However, she still builds alliances, hoping for a revolution not of political tone, but a situational revolution that would allow her not to do it (bearing in mind that, at this point, her aim is towards survival, not overthrowing the government).

Since mediation is present in every human experience, with or without mass media, and memory is an unreliable tool for "real things" to be narrated, the role of nostalgia becomes increasingly relevant in the novels. Baudrillard comments, "When the real is no longer what it was, nostalgia assumes its full meaning. There is a plethora of

myths of origin and of signs of reality – a plethora of truth, of secondary objectivity, and authenticity" (6). Even though nostalgia is not an active expression of simulation, it can be seen as the simulation an individual is subject to by his/her own mind.

As Atwood commented in her interview mentioned in section 1.1, one of the characteristics that are essential for humankind is the practice of storytelling, of narrating stories. However, storytelling is no more than selected events organized towards a unity of narration. Since such a selection is not arbitrary, it can be said that storytelling (and memory, keeping one's life story as linear narration) is a form of mediation – often resulting in nostalgia, a sense of an idyllic past, or of a past that may have been significantly different when it was experienced than it is at the point it is remembered.

This sense of nostalgia can be seen in YF quite clearly, particularly through Toby. After her first few days as Tobiatha, she remembers Pilar and her parents, in a calm scene, seemingly from her old routine. However, she interrupts her own digression, thinking,

> But where is Toby in this picture? For it is a picture. It's flat, like a picture on a wall. She's not there. She opens her eyes: tears on her cheeks. I wasn't in the picture because I'm the frame, she thinks. It's not really the past. It's only me, holding it all together. It's only a handful of fading neural pathways. It's only a mirage. (239)

Since Toby is a character who is unusually self-aware, this is not entirely surprising. At the same time she finds calm and peace remembering her loved ones, Toby reminds herself that her own memories of her parents and of Pilar only exist in her mind, and that she is ascribing meaning and linearity to them. By saying, "I'm the frame", she acknowledges the mediation that occurs inside her mind, causing her to feel nostalgic.

Nostalgia is also referred to in *Oryx and Crake,* even though it is not within the scope of this thesis. Atwood's world shows how nostalgia and mediation can cause very

partial representations. For example, when Jimmy's father comments on how life used to be before the world was divided into Compounds and Pleeblands, he looks at it longingly: "Remember when you could drive anywhere? Remember when everyone lived in the Pleeblands? . . . Remember hamburger chains, always real beef, remember hot-dog stands? . . . Remember when voting mattered?" (*Oryx*, 72). Surely, Jimmy's father's nostalgia has other influences on its creation in comparison to Toby's, in the sense that some of those "nostalgias" refer to constructions and/or perceptions that may not have been "real" even before the Compounds. Such as the idea of the worth of voting, regardless of its actual effectiveness, it is an idea insistently fed to citizens by both state and mass media.

YF and HG are two books that exist within trilogies: YF is preceded by *Oryx and Crake* and followed by *MaddAddam*, whereas HG is followed both by *Catching Fire* and *Mockingjay*. Although my choices of corpus for this thesis were already elaborated in the Introduction and this relationship constitutes the core of this analysis, it is important to remember that the novels surrounding them can offer further understanding on this object of study. Like the comparison above, between expressions of nostalgia by Toby and by Jimmy's father, the occasional input from these tangent novels can be fruitful.

Another instance of such input is found in *Mockingjay*: since this chapter has been dealing with reconstructions of reality through mass media, simulation and simulacra, Peeta's struggle with the very idea of the real presents an interesting issue. In the end of *Catching Fire*, he is taken hostage by the Capitol, while Katniss is rescued by the rebels. After those rebels succeed in rescuing him as well, he enters a frantic, maniacal state at the sight of Katniss and attempts to kill her. Later they discover that Peeta underwent torture with tracker-jacker venom, causing him to blur the line between what happened

to him and what Capitol scientists produced as memories in his mind. In *Mockingjay*, he struggles to regain some sense of reality.

Helen Day, in "Simulacra, sacrifice and survival in *The Hunger Games*, *Battle Royale* and *The Running Man*" claims that "Simulation, in this series, is always a temporary state: the real can be hijacked, but it always returns. Just as Peeta's mind is hijacked by aversion therapy and tracker-jacker venom to hate Katniss, so he eventually recognizes the shiny quality of simulation" (ch. 14). This claim that reality can be recovered seems to have been made lightly. Both Baudrillard's theory of the simulacrum and Baccolini's defense of the role of hope contribute to make the problem more complicated than it initially seems to be. Baudrillard's theory indicates that the real would not be recovered, since its substitution by signs, by the simulacrum, tends to the annihilation of the real, of the referentials. On the other hand, Baccolini points out that hope, as a device, pushes the plot onward. Restoring Peeta's sense of reality does not have to happen, but the idea that it is possible must exist.

Collins's description of Peeta's treatment towards reality in *Mockingjay* actually resonates curiously in YF. The character's habit of describing a memory, followed by the question "Real or not real?", whose answer is "Real", resembles Ren's desire for the pleebrats' "shiny things". Peeta actually comments, when one of his memories is confirmed, "I thought so. There was nothing... shiny about it" (*Mockingjay*, 320). The attribution of an unnatural sparkle to simulacra points at a possible connection of Baudrillard's theory with the construction of postmodern dystopias, resonating in contemporary works. Although postmodern dystopias require further analysis to ascertain that completely, this thesis indicates a direction for such a study.

Finally, YF points towards the possibilities for humankind after the extinction of mass media, posing questions about whether simulation is still a necessary tool in a post-

apocalyptic world, where labels and headlines and bottom-lines ceased to exist. When she is stranded at the Anooyoo Spa, Toby freely used the labeled smocks, formerly of other employees: "This one says, *Melody*. There's no need to label herself now that nobody's left to read the labels, so she's begun wearing the smocks of the others: *Anita, Quintana, Ren, Carmel, Symphony*" (17). Being completely alone, at the same time everything is hers and is not, the labels ceased to have meaning – the signs have been emptied.

This seems a different type of empty sign from the one discussed by Baudrillard. While his theory considers the signs leading the lives of people subject to their exchanges, the lack of subjects that undergo this influence is not considered; this consideration belongs in the field of dystopia studies. If there are no subjects, one can postulate the destruction of signs. Rather: in YF there is one subject, for whom labels (signs) slowly lose meaning. That may point to a restoration of the referential (smocks lose sign value in order to become mere items of clothing), but, at the same time, the sign and its dealings are revealed as a social instrument, whose power may return to the subject's hands following the collapse of the models.

2. "Where you can starve to death in safety" – Parody and the postmodern narrative

Parody, in its relevance for art throughout human history, received several definitions. Most of them share characteristics involving the reference to a "source" artwork, often involving ridiculing it or exposing its flaws, creating inversions in an artwork's inner logic or exaggerating the tools used in its construction. When it comes to postmodern art, the fragility of those definitions is clearly exposed. Regardless of any limitation from previous definitions, parody is still relevant for artistic expression.

Given its pervasive characteristics, parody in postmodernism gains different colors, different guiding principles, while changing as art changes through history. Indeed, Linda Hutcheon's *A Theory of Parody* is concerned with that: the paradox of parody in its conservative repetition and subversive inversion. Researching parody poses its problems: identifying parody is one of the most significant ones, an encoded interaction that requires from the reader common ground with that of the encoder, as Hutcheon comments in her fifth chapter of *Parody*. However, when decoded, parody can fuel a commentary about the codes in place in a given societal structure and even about the role and capabilities of art itself.

This chapter is devoted to parody, aiming at an analysis of parodic elements in the novels in order to elucidate approximations on whether the simulacrum can be used to encode parody, according to Hutcheon's theory. In Chapter One, I discussed the implications of the simulacrum in representations of possible realities and how its use pervades both HG and YF. This chapter will now proceed from the simulacrum to its end, analyzing how the novels frequently parody coded discourses through quotation, subversion, and satire.

Before proceeding to the parodic elements in YF and HG, it is important to delimit the theoretical framework for this discussion. Hutcheon's *A Theory of Parody*, with occasional support from *Irony's Edge* and *The Poetics of Postmodernism*, guided the research because of its flexible but detailed account of diverse definitions of parody in modern and postmodern art, often drawing examples from architecture, music, painting, sculpture and literature.

Another aspect that justifies Hutcheon's theory as a choice is based on her assertion that parody is not dependent on the element of ridicule. She argues that, although laughter has been a common result of parody, it is not the single element defining its existence – which is her main point of disagreement with other definitions of parody. Although she often quotes Genette's *Paratexts* as another influential voice in defining parody, Hutcheon is clear on the need to see parody as more than a textual relation. She claims, "In other words, a purely formal analysis of parody as text relations . . . will not do justice to the complexity of these phenomena", after stating that "it is very difficult to separate pragmatic strategies from formal structures" (*Parody* 34), arguing for an avoidance of the excess of formality in studying parody.

Hutcheon's mention of another concept of parody, however, steers clear from the extreme opposite. In her fourth chapter of *Parody*, she approaches the paradox of parody through Bakhtin's idea of "authorized transgression", that is, she questions whether parody is the carnival of art. The tension between conservation of forms and their subversion by difference, for Hutcheon, although it occasionally tips the balance from excess of formality to excess of subversion, is what establishes parody. In order to provide a theory that matches such a balancing act, Hutcheon works to provide a diversity of working concepts, approaching its ethos, ends and threads in common with satire, burlesque, and allusion.

Simon Dentith, in *Parody*, argues for a spectrum of imitative language, with parody at the end of the scale, signaling that, for him, parody involves derision and diminishing a parodied work. However, he does not believe that definitions of parody should be as rigid except when dealing with comparatively different cultural codes (6). Hutcheon's definition, on the other hand, states parody to be "a form of repetition with ironic distance, marking difference rather than similarity" (xii). Her effort to propose a simple yet balanced definition encompasses parody's paradox and frees it from its former limitation by previous theories at the same time.

Very often parody and satire come to be understood as the same thing, both exposing caricatures of a given style or artwork. For Hutcheon, they differ at the pragmatic level, that is, while satire is extramural, seeking some sort of correction or education on the reading public, parody is intramural, concerned with text relations and codes. She recognizes that tracing the line separating parody from satire is sometimes too challenging; for that end, she proposes a range of pragmatic ethos for parody, "from scornful ridicule to reverential homage" (37). That range allows analysis to avoid the tendency of aggregating value judgement to literary works: while her quotation of Robert Newmann implies that mediocre works of art may be subject to parody, Hutcheon steers towards the idea that "popular works of art are always parodied, whatever their quality" (18). As a result, judgements on value are, in general, avoided in this thesis, as they are irrelevant to the analysis of parody in the novels.

Finally, this thesis also does not consider the figurations of the author in the construction of parody. For research purposes, considering the concept of the artist as potential space is far more useful for analysis – Hutcheon herself does not work with the authority of the author, preferring the term encoder. In her discussion of parody as an act of communication between encoder and reader, she states,

> It is only the encoded intention, as inferred by the receiver as decoder, that will be dealt with here. There is clearly a new interest in "contextualism" today, and any theory of parody should also be premised on the belief that '. . . the same texts paradoxically contribute to the backgrounds that determine their meanings' (Schleusener 1980, 669). (24)

The artist, therefore, is present to the extent that the reader can decode that presence from the text. The extent to which that communication is effective or not will depend on the encoder's and the decoder's artistic, economic and sociological background.

Therefore, this chapter deals with the communication between encoder and decoding public concerning the coded discourses that pervade the society in which science fiction and dystopian works flourish. In HG and YF there are several instances that allow for a parodic reading of coded discourses and, on occasion, an ironic distancing from art itself as its metafictional traits. These parodied coded discourses deal with matters of targeted audience and media language.

2.1. Parody of coded discourses

In addition to Hutcheon's innovations in parody theory, according to whom ridicule is not a necessary character in its use, she also extends the matter of parody's target. She proposes, "[It] is always another work of art or, more generally, another form of coded discourse" (16), widening the possibilities for parody. Although there is no definition of coded language, it is arguable that it may contemplate formulas of discourse, structures of communication that are so repeated that become part of a society. This is implied from her example of parody of coded discourse in Woody Allen's *Zelig,* "a cinematic parody of the television documentary and movie newsreel" (18). Her comments on the target of parody result in two main questions for this thesis.

The first one, if extrapolated, could support the argument that, after all, all usage of language and discourse is parodic. If parody's target can be trivial registers such as football announcing tropes, what can be said to not be parody, if all human language is learned and entirely derivative? Although valid as a question when identifying traces of coded discourse in the novels, to say that all language is parody eventually leads to a discussion of originality – that Hutcheon also covers, on the frequent conflict between copyright holders and parody artists –, that eventually leads to the conclusion that there is no original artwork and no original language. As a conclusion, even if it is arguable that coded discourses may open a dangerous trap door to the emptiness of meaning in parody, codes are parodied when they are portrayed, especially taking into consideration Hutcheon's concept of ironic distancing, regardless of any matters of originality.

The second question raised by parody's targets is actually a result of the first one: if that trap door of empty meaning of parodied coded discourses is seen through Baudrillard's theory of the simulacrum, instead of diverting towards nihilism, the discussion turns to the idea that signs and codes have come to deal with themselves. In other words, there is no conflict in considering coded language discourse parody if we consider that coded languages, as formulaic structures of communication, are systems of signs dealing with each other, shifting each other as well. In that sense, coded discourse parody fits one of Hutcheon's possible translations for the *-para* in parody: instead of it being a "counter-song", against something else, it may also be "the song beside", as a paratext, as a dialogue among texts (32).

Parodies of coded discourses will often have a strong satiric edge; drawing from Genette's terminology, Hutcheon states,

> There are two possible directions that the overlapping of parody and satire
> can take, since the aim of parody is intramural and that of satire is

extramural – that is, social or moral. There, on the one hand, a *type* of the *genre* parody (in Genette's (1979) terms) which is satiric, and whose target is still another form of coded discourse: Woody Allen's *Zelig* ridicules the conventions of the television and movie documentary. On the other hand, besides this satiric parody, there is parodic satire (a *type* of the *genre* satire) which aims at something outside the text, but which employs parody as a vehicle to achieve its satiric or corrective end. (62)

For the novels studied in this thesis, genre parody is adequate as a form of analysis, since Atwood and Collins employ inversions and exaggerations of coded discourses widely known in contemporary society – science fiction discourse, religious discourse, and mass media discourse. Such an exaggeration, along with the occasional deliberate usage of tropes from those registers, may cause the reader to notice their pervasiveness in "real life," a consequence of the satiric element in parody. The novels, however, do not seek to enact corrections in society – in fact, HG is often charged with profiting greatly from the horrific violence or manipulation of reality shows it exposes, as I discuss in section 2.1.3.

The next subsections deal with the textual evidence that signals the inversion, isolation or exaggeration of genre parody of coded discourses.

2.1.1 Science fiction

As discussed in Chapter One, defining science fiction is a challenging endeavor that may result in just a convolution of characteristics found in the genre. Since seeking final definitions for science fiction is not even a concern in postmodern criticism, it is more feasible to consider the novels studied in this thesis as coming from a line of other publications strongly influenced by science, but also by social conflicts, war, and the unprecedented rise of television and, later on, the Internet.

Brian Stableford traces a line of science fiction history, in the first chapter of *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction* (2003). With the working concept of speculative fiction in late 19th century, stories covered imaginary worlds and scenarios; however, as the 20th century began, the explanation given to accessing such worlds involved the dream state. "Almost all of the colorful fantasies in imitation of *A Princess of Mars* [1912] were essentially dream stories, although few of them were scornful of facilitating devices" (29), claims Stableford; facilitating devices are what he calls the access a given character had to the alternate reality, echoing Atwood's own comment on ustopia.

> As ustopia is by definition elsewhere, it is almost always bracketed by two journeys: the one that transports the tale-teller to the other place and the one that transports him (or her) back so he can deliver his report to us. Thus the writer of the book always has to come up with a mode of transport. When utopias were placed on islands, the journey was a simple matter of a sea voyage, and then of some sort of rescue by boat. (ch. 1)

Where science fiction is concerned, there is no common means of transportation and communication involved; Stableford's facilitating devices are, then, essential for making science fiction narratives plausible, if not scientifically accurate. That is where, still according to Stableford, science fiction took a turn from other speculative fiction.

Under the influence of H. G. Wells, many early science fiction writers "were enthusiastic to deploy pseudoscientific jargon in support of their facilitating devices" ("History", 29). Even before science fiction was consolidated under its name (with variations including scientific romance, scientifiction, among others), the scientific discourse was inserted; holograms and gravity and teletransportation were "explained" by means of pseudoscientific discourse – a simulacrum of science's coded discourse, in

other words. As scientifiction, a more didactic approach to science fiction, became widespread with the era of magazines, science was spoken of only with praise and awe towards the inventions and discoveries of humankind – evidencing an eventual state of utopia (30).

Although science fiction and utopia are not the same thing, they are often part of the structure of the same novels. Some of its classics speak with awe of the so-called "evolution" that took place in that alternative society. One of the most famous examples of that is Huxley's *Brave New World*, a classic science fiction utopia/dystopia that begins with the Director touring students through the fertilization process: "this receptacle was immersed in a warm buillon containing free-swimming spermatozoa – at a minimum concentration of one hundred thousand per cubic centimetre" (3). Clearly, scientific discourse is one of the building blocks of the novel, giving the plot its fact-proof feel and the notion of progress through science, eliminating differences among individuals.

Huxley himself, part of a more mature stage of science fiction that questioned its previous pristine reputation, was rejected by science fiction writers of his time. He "was supposed to say something uplifting about science and provide the emotional pay-offs that come with adventure" ("History", 45). The resemblance of this criticism with Atwood's reasons for denying the label for her novels may not be accidental, for this was one of the first backlash reactions to science fiction that do not revere science, but the reactions consider the consequences of science's unrestricted development.

Following the conflicts of what could be named science fiction and what could be not, typical of the 1950s and 1960s, Stableford sees a before and an after to the process: "sf before the 1960s was predominantly *empirical* or *readerly* . . . you accepted what was on the page as if seeing through clear glass", while the later expressions were an "*epistemological* or *writerly* invitation to endless interpretation." (62, emphasis on

original). This process is relevant for the consideration of science fiction as a consolidated genre with its own coded discourse; that pseudoscientific, reverential speech whose inversion began in the 1960s but has been reaching its full fragmentation in the last decades.

The foremost sign of ironic distancing from the coded discourse in science fiction that can be found in HG and YF is the treatment of that very tone of awe towards scientific advancements. Katniss's narrative voice, as the high-speed train brings her to the pre-Games proceedings, at first complies with tradition:

> The cameras haven't lied about its grandeur. If anything, they have not quite captured the magnificence of the glistening buildings in a rainbow of hues that tower into the air, the shiny cars that roll down the wide paved streets, the oddly dressed people with bizarre hair and painted faces who have never missed a meal. (72)

The protagonist's first reaction of admiration is succeeded by her sense of class and abundance, in stark contrast with her previous background. While acknowledging that the Capitol looks astonishing, Katniss focuses on its citizens and she can only think of all the food they never missed. The traditional coded discourse is used and questioned in the end, but the questioning does not ridicule the content of that first convention.

In YF, awe towards scientific advancements and/or explorations is more veiled; the reasons involve the novel's complementary relationship with *Oryx and Crake* and the nature of YF's characters, none of which are, as Snowman would say, "numbers people". The voice of praise for science and its potential of nature manipulation occur mainly in Crake's appearances, particularly detectable in Crake's first appearance in the novel, when he visits Pilar. As Amanda asks him what was wrong with Pilar, he answers, "Illness is a design fault . . . It could be corrected" (147). He is immediately recognized as a

"number person" from the Compounds and his discourse is marked in that context, signaling the value of science and of academic discourse as well. However, the way his speech is received renders the distance between the Gardeners and people from the Compounds explicit: "Only brainiacs from there talked like that: not answering your question up front, then saying some general kind of thing as if they knew it for a fact" (147), says Ren, partially impressed, but mostly confused about his language.

Additionally, what would be detailed explanations in praise of the advancements of science mostly reach the characters in YF through mediation, overly vague descriptions caused either by lack of interest from the narrators or by the passing on of explanations that lose their specificity before reaching them in the first place. This can be seen in Ren's description of the effects of the BlyssPluss pill, introduced at her workplace:

> There was something new they'd started using just after I went into the Sticky Zone – BlyssPluss, it was called. Hassle-free sex, total satisfaction, blow you right out of your skin, plus 100 percent protection – that was the word on it. . . . Scales was testing the BlyssPluss for the Rejoov Corp, so they weren't handing it out like candy – it was mostly for the top customers – but I could hardly wait to try it. (130)

It is notable from the previous excerpt that, actually, there was hardly any science fiction involved in BlyssPluss for trapeze dancers such as Ren – instead, she receives catchphrases, end-results and propaganda-like descriptions, which most probably would have been developed by Jimmy himself.

The contrast with the pill's description found in *Oryx and Crake* can lead to interesting conclusions. When Jimmy is brought to work on the marketing of the BlyssPluss, his first exposure to the project is completely different from Ren's.

Which had led to the concept of the BlyssPluss. The aim was to produce a single pill, that, at one and the same time:

a)   would protect the user against all known sexually transmitted diseases, fatal, inconvenient, or merely unsightly;

b)   would provide an unlimited supply of libido and sexual prowess, coupled with a generalized sense of energy and well-being, thus reducing the frustration and blocked testosterone that led to jealousy and violence, and eliminating feelings of low self-worth;

c)   would prolong youth.

… The BlyssPluss pill would also act as a sure-fire one-time-does-it-all birth-control pill, for male and female alike. (346-7)

Atwood's different explanations of the same *novum* (as Suvin might have defined it) are not accidental. While attentive to the formulas of science fiction (as the explanation in *Oryx and Crake* demonstrates), her characterization and insertion of science fiction components demonstrate awareness of social and contextual elements. Ren, the trapeze dancer, receives a marketing-mediated explanation; Jimmy, the one responsible for that mediation, receives a quasi-scientific explanation. Atwood does not attempt to detail the workings of her *nova* by using pseudoscientific discourse; by employing some means of mediation, she echoes that speech, but sets some distance from science fiction "proper", as she calls it herself.

Similarly, Katniss is excluded from the processes of science. However, she is exposed to several advancements credited to various fields of science – telecommunications, medicine, transportation, to name a few – even though she is unaware of their mechanisms. She recognizes the symbols of science, but other than that, they constitute empty signs for her. The signs of actual science on the making are

inaccessible, but still existing. "Through the glass, I see the doctors working feverishly on Peeta, their browns creased in concentration. I see the flow of liquids, pumping through the tubes, watch a wall of dials and lights that mean nothing to me. I'm not sure, but I think his heart stops twice" (422). Collins also employs mediation to transmit and to distance her narration from science fiction, all the while still writing it.

Another evidence of parody of science fiction as a coded discourse in the novels, besides mediation, is the casual tone often found in science fiction traits inserted in the plot, or how inventions or mutations have mingled so intimately with their environment that they do not stand out as scientific advancements to the characters and/or narrators. That shift in tone of narrative converses with the didactic tone in science fiction in general from the 20th century, especially typical of utopian works within the genre of science fiction. Edward James, in his chapter for *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction*, calls the practice the "'info-dump', in which one character painstakingly explains the details of this world" ("Utopia and anti-utopia", 222). In YF and HG, the explanatory voice is absent; a sense of estrangement can be provoked on the reader by juxtaposing *nova* and props already familiar for him/her. That same estrangement establishes a dialectics of parody of coded discourse when the reader (the decoder) recognizes the "info-dump" from several other science fiction works.

In HG, this is mainly seen in Collins's approach to birds. They have a strong symbolic presence in the novel, in the presence of mockingbirds, jabberjays, and mockingjays. Jabberjays, according to Katniss, were a species of mutation created by the Capitol, able to hear and record entire conversations among rebels. However, the rebels were said to have discovered the maneuver and fed lies to the opposing side. As a result, they were "abandoned to die off in the wild" (52). The jabberjays mated with mockingbirds, creating mockingjays, able to reproduce bird and human notes. Needless

to say, mockingjays play a crucial role not only in HG, but throughout the series. As Katniss becomes the symbol of the rebels, she will be called "the Mockingjay", a result of the artificial and the natural combined.

When proposing that parody does not necessarily aim at demoralizing an artwork and arguing for a range of pragmatic ethos in its practice, Hutcheon discusses the act of communication between encoder and decoder. Both "must effect a structural superimposition of texts that incorporates the old into the new. Parody is a bitextual synthesis." (33) The first artwork can be seen as the jabberjay and its parody the mockingjay. Their synthesis points to their similarities and their differences: the mockingjay is born in the wild, able to recognize human and bird songs – what they share is the trait of reproduction. Be that reproduction approximate, vague, purposeful or casual, it is the synthesis among them, and it makes the failure of humankind in designing an animal for their spying needs explicit.

In parallel with the symbolic use of birds in HG, there is also the shift with "info-dump" in HG. Katniss explains how jabberjays were created and then banished; however, she is content with calling them "mutations, or mutts" instead of explaining how a bird could possibly carry its animal appearance while tracking, selecting, and recording conversations that might interest the Capitol. Her interest lies in the way the animals were discarded, but they found a way to perpetuate some of their traits, eventually becoming a symbol of resistance. She calls the mockingjays "something of a slap in the face of the Capitol" (51). The "info-dump" only consists of an anecdote on the way the oppressive government was fooled in the past and its symbolic value will pervade the construction of her character (Katniss's relationship with her father and, consequently, with music), explaining some points without actually explaining them.

YF, on the other hand, does not even bother with explanations that are not explanations. In fact, the reader may go through most of the novel without actually understanding some of its *nova* or may even go without noticing them. There is a sense of the casual that pervades descriptions of the environment around the characters that signals a naturalization of the effects of scientific development. They have mingled with natural species for so long that they "feel natural" to the characters. This is notable from the first chapter on Toby's narration, situating her in the isolated AnooYoo Spa.

> The swimming pool has a mottled blanket of algae. Already there are frogs. The herons and the egrets and the peagrets hunt them, at the shallow end. For a while Toby tried to scoop out the small animals that had blundered in and drowned. The luminous green rabbits, the rats, the rakunks, with their striped tails and raccoon bandit masks. But now she leaves them alone. Maybe they'll generate fish, somehow. When the pool is more like a swamp. (4)

Animals already known to humankind and those that resulted from genetic manipulation go hand in hand. There is a signal of mutation in the "green rabbits", but rakunks and peagrets allude to the state of animal species in the series, as animals genetically engineered are as common as animals born in nature – other mixtures are alluded to, such as liobams and pigoons. In order to reach whatever meaning can be linked to these manipulated species, the reader must either search it in the parts of the word or on occasional descriptions, scattered through the novel. Investing the reader with the power to investigate personally the intricacies of animal life creates a differential approach to the "info-dump" from coded science fiction.

Another instance of that casual enumeration in YF, in which *nova* (for the reader) are inserted among familiar descriptions, can be seen in the chaos that took place after the

decimation of most of humankind, following the Waterless Flood. "The boulevard was jammed with cars, trucks, solarbikes, and buses" (21) is one among several instances of unexplained objects. Solarbikes is the item standing out for the reader, but not for the narrator. Surely, the recognition of the parodic game with the coded discourse of science fiction depends not only on the existence of textual evidence, but also on the capability of the reader/decoder of recognizing the distancing provoked by the difference instilled in the creation of science fiction without the "info-dump" from authority figures.

That parodic game will be complemented in HG and YF, but with different tangents. While HG will turn towards the *1984* notion of forced entertainment – in both novels the screens are constantly lit, entertainment and surveillance are entwined too closely for the characters to see clearly between them –, YF turns to inversions in religious discourse. Each of those will be further analyzed in the following sections. It is challenging to know whether the encoder is building a parody on religious discourse or on infotainment discourse; those blurry lines are signaled during the discussion.

2.1.2. Religious discourse

Religious discourse, differently from that of science fiction, can be seen as a coded language with less theoretical gymnastics. Unlike science fiction, the religious discourse – in particular, that of Catholicism and other related Christian religions and cults – is known by traits of rituals, habits and traditions. One of the most famous rituals in religious discourse is the catholic mass: the audience knows when to sit, stand, or knee; the audience expects a sermon and it is deeply familiarized with the section in which the priest would transform wine into the blood of Jesus. As it happens with the catholic mass, religion is filled with traditions and speech conventions that are identified as markers of religious discourse.

In science fiction history, the religious discourse is not portrayed under a particularly positive light. Indeed, Farah Mendlesohn, in her chapter on the relation between religion and the genre in *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction*, remarks that, "The association of religion with the uncivilized remained a common trope in the Golden Age of the 1940s and 1950s" (266), during which "religious ritual and belief [were seen as] an indication of failure" (266). Such a belief is directly related to the didactic end given to the genre of scientifiction, popular during those decades: a duality with religion on one end and secular science on the other indicated that the two concepts were immiscible.

However, religion does not have that oxymoronic relation with science fiction written towards the end of the 20th century and the current century. Paul Nahin, in *Holy Sci-Fi!*, lists several works of science fiction that approach religious issues within its structures, including "speculations of religious nature", such as Arthur C. Clarke's "Star", which includes speculations on possible geographic damages caused by the Star of Bethlehem. Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, published in 1984, deals with a totalitarian state ruling the remains of humankind – in the novel, religious wars are used as an excuse to turn Gilead into a theocratic state.

More importantly, YF puts religious discourse in the spotlight. The God's Gardeners cult is Atwood's parodic approach to many of the issues concerning religion, state, and even economics. Granted, HG does not carry that trait. In both novels, however, the ruling power seems to rely solely on economics and entertainment. In YF, religion becomes a sort of resistance; the several inversions of roles in the novel parody not only religion's demeaning portrayal in science fiction, but it also questions the conventions of the coded discourse itself.

The God's Gardeners have beliefs that correspond to Catholicism. Their holy book is the Bible; while they believe in saints and have traditional feasts and dates, those hardly coincide with catholic traditions. For instance, there is no celebration of Christmas, but April Fish is one of the most important Gardener holidays. The cult leader, Adam One, delivers a sermon that ponders the date:

> Saint Francis of Assisi preached a sermon to the Fish, not realizing that the Fish commune directly with God. Still, the saint was affirming the respect due to them. How prophetic does this appear, now that the world's Oceans are being laid waste!
>
> Others may take the Specist view that we Humans are smarter than Fish, and thus an April Fish is being marked as mute and foolish. . . . To be an April Fish is to humbly accept our own silliness, and to cheerfully admit the absurdity – from a materialistic view – of every Spiritual truth we profess. (196)

There are, in this excerpt, several markers of parodic play with the religious discourse – although it is arguable that, in tune with Hutcheon's concept of parody, that play does not imply a ridiculing effect. The saints for the God's Gardeners are not necessarily the same and Adam One does not speak of miracles carried out by them, but of their deeds to protect the planet's environment. Animals and other concepts are capitalized, but, most importantly, Adam One's sermons rely on the Bible to extract messages that are entirely different from those preached by other belief systems that rare based on the Bible.

The concept of the sacred is different for the Gardeners, considering, for instance, the capitalization. Animals are capitalized – Fish, Man, Primates –, along with concepts and ideas highly regarded in the cult – Spirit, Creation –, but also nouns that are ordinary for the reader – Ocean, for instance. That use of capitalization carries that doubleness

typical of postmodern novels and parody: on the one hand, the cult created by Atwood has adapted to its era, causing its concepts of the sacred to shift. As the planet goes to waste, words related to the "natural" world become as abstract as the spiritual world. It is not an accident that this capitalization creates a distancing, abstract effect, as words such as "ocean" lose their references and become simulacra, symbols of a marine life that is dead when Adam One preaches.

On the other hand, the facilitating device in Adam One's sermons is never given. The reader has access to Toby's and Ren's narratives, and s/he is reminded several times during the novel that the God's Gardeners consider writing to be dangerous and used only as practice for learning, wiped from slates immediately after classes (60). How would it be possible for anyone to know which words Adam One chose to capitalize or not, if his speeches are only accessible through Toby's and Ren's memories? There is no textual evidence of Adam One writing down his own sermons; even the hymns sung by the cult are practiced and memorized, not written down. Atwood provides no explanation, no "info-dump" on how the reader is able to see the contents of Adam One's sermons, adding to the widespread notion that the author is known to leave several blanks in her writing.[13]

While the Gardener hymns can be seen as parodying gospel music – once more, producing ironic distancing from religious music[14], not ridiculing it –, they are even parodied – this time, with ridicule – by Zeb, one of the members of the cult. Unlike other Gardeners, Zeb leaves their territory for secret missions and often disregards certain traditions. Ren has significant contact with him during his relationship with her mother, Lucerne:

> We could hear Zeb singing in the shower:

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[13] Melissa de Sá, in her master's thesis, comments on the blanks left by Atwood in *Oryx and Crake* and YF.

[14] The Gardener hymns were recorded by Orville Stoeber, available at: https://goo.gl/XG2PWr .

Nobody gives a poop.

Nobody gives a poop.

And that is why we're in the soup,

Cause nobody gives a poop! (132-3)

Zeb and his disregard for dogma are overlooked by Adam One because of the skills he provides – strength, contacts in the Pleeblands, in the Compounds, and combat training. His shower songs, although playful, signal a disenchanted notion of the future, ironically in synchrony with the Gardener belief that a waterless flood was near.

Considering, once more, the reader's access to Adam One's speeches, another element of parodic inversion can be seen in their titles. The cult leader, unlike the proverbial priest, understands the scientific method, its language and conventions; instead of denying them or arguing for their dismissal, his sermons incorporate the concepts. Titles such as "Of God's methodology in creating men" (52), "Of the Foolishness within all religions" (195), and "Of God as the Alpha Predator" (345) signal the distancing, but not rupture, with the contemporary religious discourse in the marked phrasings "methodology", "foolishness", and "alpha predator". The fact that such phrasing is coherent within the cult's logic adds to the effect of ironic distancing from contemporary sermons.

Not all references and inversions involving religion as a coded discourse trace back to Adam One. As YF reveals, the designer of the waterless flood, Glenn – later to adopt the alias Crake – shows interest in the Gardener belief system, debating it at length with Ren when she is a teenager.

Glenn used to say the reason you can't really imagine yourself being dead was that as soon as you say, "I'll be dead", you've said the word *I,* and so you're still alive inside the sentence. And that's how people got the idea

> of immortality of the soul – it was a consequence of grammar. And so was
> God, because as soon as there's a past tense, there has to be a past before
> the past, and you keep going back in time until you get to *I don't know*,
> and that's what God is. . . . and grammar would be impossible without the
> FoxP2 gene; so God is a brain mutation . . . (316)

As a manipulator of religious concepts, Glenn surely is in a diametrically opposed position in comparison with Adam One. For him, notions of transcendence stem from the constitution of the human brain, and not the opposite – while Glenn believes the idea of God to be a mere result of a brain mutation, Adam One professes a creator that would have generated the brain.

Paradoxically, Atwood communicates that existence is subject to grammar through Ren, whose grammar is lacking in accuracy. While the belief and concept of a creator are subjected to the gene of grammar, it is possible to detect that Ren's grammar is problematic, as is her faith. She narrates her story, she comments on the fact that she did not know if she actually believed in what the Gardeners preached, but their traditions made her feel "at home" (210). Language and the concept of God are intricately linked in the novel.

That link between religion and language is actually an extension from *Oryx and Crake,* in which language and its survival are personified in Snowman; however, as the novel progresses, it becomes clear that Jimmy cannot narrate certain passages and uses lists as a coping mechanism. There is subtle irony in the last man, responsible for keeping language alive, not being able to use it properly, resorting to narrative strategies other than storytelling. Sharon Wilson, in her chapter for the *Cambridge Companion to Margaret Atwood* (2006), comments, "Snowman acts as trickster creator: his attempt to keep words from becoming extinct succeeds in that he manages to tell the story we read"

(187). The relationship of the use of language itself with central themes in the sequence of books may shift, as from storytelling to religion, but it is in both cases identifiable at the level of plot and narrative structure.

A literary constitution that creates at a level (like Adam One's detailed sermons, in writing) and that undoes it at another (the inner logic of the novel exposes that it would be impossible for the sermons to ever be written down) is in tune with Hutcheon's view of a pragmatic approach of signs in parody. She claims,

> A pragmatic approach that concentrates on the practical effects of signs is particularly relevant to the study of the interaction of verbal irony with parody and satire, because what is required in such a study is an account of the conditions and characteristics of the utilization of the particular system of communication which irony establishes within each genre. (52)

Atwood's parody of religion as a coded discourse, operating in more than one structural level of the novel, creates an element of estrangement. That element, when substituted in a colloquial coded discourse, exposes the structure of that system of communication at the same time that it produces irony. Though irony may signal pejorative opinions on what is being portrayed, Atwood's irony targets the coded formulas and not religion itself.

YF provides some textual evidence that Atwood does not aim at an extramural satire of religion, especially in the way Gardeners are portrayed as the one peaceful escape in the chaos preceding the waterless flood. Adam One's sermons, in particular, evoke a different perspective on traditional interpretations of the Bible. His varying interpretations include the view that humankind is not to consider itself superior to other species inhabiting the planet – e.g. the excerpt, "Others may take the Specist view that we Humans are smarter than Fish" (196). In addition, his sermons constantly attempt to conciliate science and religion, against traditional ideas in the history of science fiction.

After looking at Adam One's titles and his views on the human species not being the most important on the planet, it is necessary to discuss some examples of his conciliation between the scientific discourse and that of religion. He often rationalizes the narrative style of the Bible, arguing,

> The Human Words of God speak of the Creation in terms that could be understood by the men of old. There is no talk of galaxies or genes, for such terms would have confused them greatly! But must we therefore take as scientific fact the story that the world was created in six days, thus making a nonsense of observable data? God cannot be held to the narrowness of literal and materialistic interpretations . . . (11)

Mendlesohn's views on science fiction and religion do us service here: after World War II, "religion is repeatedly depicted as dangerous, diverting humans (and aliens) from the path of reason and true enlightenment" (269). That form changes as, according to her, the stance shifts from "practice rather than faith" (265) to that of "faith rather than ritual" (271), signaling a shift from practice to transcendence, seen by Mendlesohn as a result of the traumatic events from the final stages of the war (the atomic bomb, in particular). Curiously, that shift resonates in two excerpts from YF: the one cited previously, in which Adam One claims that the Bible contained the only language that could be understood at the time. He does not deny scientific discoveries, but argues for transcendence, inherent to talking about God.

The second passage, curiously, has already been discussed in the previous chapter. Adam One's conversation with Toby reveals his belief that "Action precedes faith" (168). In other words, Adam One works on a transcendental picture of God in his sermons to the Gardeners, echoing the shift from practice to faith described by Mendlesohn. However, in close quarters he deviates back to the ritual preceding faith. Surely, it cannot

be argued that such subversions of science fiction convention and history are present in the novel on purpose; but such inversions found in the presence of religious discourse in the novel signal a level of parody.[15]

The conflict between practice and faith is also exemplified at the level of plot, in addition to that of discourse. In chapter one, I discussed how Adam One depicts the Fall of Men as a fall towards simulacra, that is, as a fall towards the era of images in detriment of actual objects and referentials. However, as Toby finds out when she is promoted to Eve Six,

> The Adams and Eves had a laptop. Toby had been shocked to discover this – wasn't such a device in direct contravention of Gardener principles? – but Adam One reassured her: they never went online with it except with extreme precaution . . . Nevertheless, they had one. "It's like the Vatican's porn collection," Zeb told her. "Safe in our hands." (188-9)

Admittedly, though parody does not depend on a ridiculing factor for it to be parody, it can provoke humorous effects, as it can be seen in Zeb's remark cited previously. The relationship between the excerpt discussed in chapter one – the Fall towards simulacra – , when contrasted with Toby's surprise at their possession of a laptop, leads to the conclusion that, at least in this case, the simulacrum was an essential tool for creating parodic effect.

Finally, to evidence the doubleness of the religious discourse in the novel, the official website dedicated to YF carries relevant information. Inside the tab "Books+", it is possible to find "some of the books it is thought may have influenced the founders of

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[15] It is important to remember Hutcheon's concept of encoded intent. Discussion of active intent by Atwood in creating such a complex depiction and parody of religious discourse is not useful for this discussion, since the communication of parody, although based on an encoded intent, does not depend on an individual's intent of encoding. Similarly, it cannot be expected that all readers notice all traces of parody available, as with encoded intent, there is an "ideal" reader that renders the communication of parody possible in the first place. (85)

the God's Gardeners in their youth, before they discarded electronic modes of communication and severely limited their use of paper products"[16]. Initially, it gives the impression that the Gardeners seemed more to be a scientific, eco-friendly group of people, instead of the religious cult they are known to be in the novel. However, before the actual list of books, the website offers space for banners by other publishers and promotes money donations; after the said donation and banner placement, the book is inserted on the list that is supposed to have inspired the Gardeners. Among other implications that the practice can induce, in the light of the novel's approach to religious discourse, the list of books, a result of donations, once again, the doubleness of religion is exposed, based on scientific values and the practice of donations guiding that same base, instead of the "faith" professed by Adam One in his sermons. [17]

2.1.3. Infotainment

In Chapter One, I discussed mass media and their various simulacra in the novels. There was a description of the way these simulacra effect the reader and how they construe the alternative worlds of science fiction in HG and YF. In this subsection, the approach is slightly different: in order to discuss the parody of mass media, considering them a coded discourse, it is necessary to question some concepts before approaching parody and even infotainment.

The terms media and mediation are occasionally interchangeable with mass media, although that is not the case in every instance. Mediation, in this thesis, refers to indirect communication: in that case, speech and narrative can be forms of mediation, as when Katniss describes the Mayor telling the story of Panem before the reaping in HG. Mediation can refer to the filtering and shaping of information, or even to the creation of

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[16] Available at: < http://yearoftheflood.com/reading-list/>. Accessed on: Sept. 24th, 2015.

[17] The donations mentioned here are not forwarded to Atwood or to those responsible for the website; those are sent to charity institutions focused on ecological preservation, also listed on the same page.

concepts used to direct consumption and identity formation, which is more the case of mass media forms. Mass media include, but are not restricted to, television (and its subgenres), advertising, and the Internet.

This subsection deals with mass media, especially the recent phenomenon of infotainment. The concept stems from Kellner's view of merging media: "New multimedia, which synthesize forms of radio, film, TV news and entertainment, and the mushrooming domain of cyberspace become extravaganzas of technoculture, generating expanding sites of information and entertainment, while intensifying the spectacle form of media culture" (*Media Spectacle*, 1). That merge is related to the fact that he believes that genres previously separated become unified and reshaped to entertain the audience. The idea becomes clearer in the word infotainment, as even news events become spectacles of violence, romance, or conflict, in which the aim of informing is intrinsically mixed with catering to the appealing form of entertaining narratives for the audience.

Kellner elaborates on the postmodern perspective of mass media, in particular television. He claims that, while postmodern art reacts against the elitism of modernism, "the postmodern intervention within television is a reaction against realism and the system of coded genres" (*Media Culture*, 235). As in the previous chapter I discussed the illusion of veracity that permeates mass media – representing a reality that is *more real* than reality – Kellner believes that postmodern values expose that so-called true representation as a coded discourse, a collection of television sub-genres following several mediation rules.

Kellner perceives a division between the type of intervention seen as postmodern in the arts and a postmodern intervention in the media. Regarding that separation, it is important to remember that, while this section deals with mass media as a coded discourse, that coded discourse is inserted and parodied within art, parodied for artistic

effect. These several instances of mediation in parody are one of the main concerns of this analysis.

Mass media are often guided by coded discourses, resulting in variations of a same narrative formed by a number of value judgements from cultural critics. Kellner describes,

> Commercial television has been constituted as an entertainment medium and it appears that its producers believe that audiences are most entertained by stories, by narratives with familiar and recognizable characters, plot-lines, conventions, and messages, as well as familiar genres. This aesthetic poverty of the medium has probably been responsible for its contempt by high cultural theorists and its designation as a "vast wasteland" by those who have other aesthetic tastes and values. (*Media Culture*, 235)

In that respect, Kellner argues for a need for analyzing beyond the formulas and the surfaces, disagreeing with Baudrillard on the idea that mass media is no more than white noise. Kellner proposes an adequate medium ground that value judgments do not encourage prolific analyses of important expressions such as television or, in the case of this thesis, the relevance of its coded discourses and their subversion in art forms.

When an artwork carries a parody of mass media conventions, it may not necessarily advocate against its use – since genre parody may be satiric, as previously discussed, but its aims are not extramural. However, in the composition of a book it may provide differential voices and tones: when Hutcheon comments on the two functions of irony (semantic and pragmatic) and their influences on parody, she sees parody as providing a "superimposition of semantic contexts" (54), marking textual difference the same way irony marks difference at the semantic level. Hutcheon sees parody as "a refusal

of semantic univocality" (54), that is, parody can create a resulting text with varied interpretations, and mass media as a coded discourse contributes to that end.

HG has several references to those codes of mass media that often shape the characters' lives. Collins exposes the mechanisms used to make complex individuals "fit" into the labels enforced by the representation that interests those holding the power of mediation. Before going into the Games, all tributes are prepared by their teams to personify one archetype or another; reshaping their story into a dramatic and emotional plot is an actual survival strategy in the procurement of sponsors. Katniss is surprised at the form her story and Peeta's are being sold at the Capitol:

> Effie tells everyone who's anyone in the Capitol and has been talking us up all day, trying to win us sponsors.
>
> "I've been very mysterious, though," she says, her eyes squinted half-shut. "Because, of course, Haymitch hasn't bothered to tell me your strategies. But I've done my best with what I had to work with. How Katniss sacrificed herself for her sister. How you've both successfully struggled to overcome the barbarism of your district."
>
> Barbarism? That's ironic coming from a woman helping to prepare us for slaughter. And what's she basing our success on? Out table manners? (90)

From the excerpt, it is clear that Katniss and Effie do not share the concept of barbarism. In addition, Katniss perceives her story being transformed into a story of success for attracting attention, regardless of the existence of any success in any sense. Even if Effie is referring to actual conversations, it is possible to note how, since the beginning, HG portrays daily interactions in the Capitol shaped by the appealing formulas of mass media, formulas that dictate the experience, instead of the opposite.

In preparation for the arena, the tributes undergo a series of stages, among them the interview. Even before being sorted, Katniss is aware that tributes tend to act within the scope of a stereotype, or, as Kellner could argue, "recognizable characters", so the audience would sympathize easily with their situation. Before her turn, she watches another tribute's interview, a large strong boy from District 11. She envies his lack of answers and commitment to the situation: "If only I were his size, I could get away with sullen and hostile and it would be just fine! I bet half the sponsors are at least considering him. If I had any money, I'd bet on him myself" (153). The excerpt reveals that, although recognizable characters are limited and stand alone as simulacra of the actual people impersonating these images, the stereotypes are not assigned randomly. Although Katniss wants to behave like Thresh from District 11, her gender, her fragile body type and age do not allow her to be "sullen and hostile". Mass media stereotypes, at the beginning of the novel, are exposed as deliberate simulacra for the children who abide by them as a chance for survival.

YF, although dealing with different time settings throughout its plot – before the waterless flood, before Crake even went to university, after most of the human species is dead –, is a novel about which it is safe to say that the main characters have a broken, if not sparse, exposure to the coded discourse of mass media. When Zeb returns from a mission badly injured, Toby watches Lucerne make a dramatic entrance: "'Toby,' said Lucerne, ignoring Nuala, 'how serious is it? Will he… is he…' She sounded like some old-time TV actress playing a deathbed scene" (109). Not unlike Katniss having her behavior shaped around a tragic teenager in love, Lucerne displays exaggerated gestures and voice tones that are not adequate to Zeb's actual condition. It is important to keep in mind that YF's narrators are not reliable; in this case, Toby's own attraction to Zeb may be clouding her impressions of Lucerne. However, Toby's reference to a "recognizable

character" from drama television is independent of her intent. It is possible to argue that the negative connotation to the comparison is related to the unreliability of her as a narrator, but her recovery of mass media formulas is notable regardless of the connotations. Toby has not had access to mass media in a long time (once she refers to watching movies with an old boyfriend during her brief time in university), but the formulas and the stereotypes are still references easily recovered from memory. This can be seen as evidence that the coded discourse of mass media can continue to shape identities and perspectives long after it is not present in an individual's life.

If, at first, Katniss is depicted as a character subject to modelling and reshaping in order to meet a stereotypical image to be sold, Katniss's ultimate survival in the novel is largely due to the ability she develops of reading the audience through minimal cues from Haymitch, her mentor. During the Games, the tributes are not allowed any communication with the outside world; much like the famous reality TV show Big Brother, the players are entirely isolated from whatever reactions or emotions they may be causing. After years of being forced to watch the Games, Katniss develops an understanding of what she is supposed to do next to please her audience. The first time she understands that is after wondering why she had not received anything for a long while: "*Maybe he's sending you a message*, it says. A message. Saying what? Then I know. There's only one good reason Haymitch could be withholding water from me. Because he knows I've almost found it" (204). The protagonist seems to understand the ways the coded discourse of the reality show subgenre surrounds her.

The process is intensified as she finds Peeta, aware as she is that they must play out a hopeless teenage romance to gain sympathy from the public. "I lean forward and kiss him, stopping his words. This is probably overdue anyway, since he's right, we are supposed to be madly in love" (315), Katniss ponders. Immediately after that, they receive

a meal from the sponsors. Katniss manipulates such cues to increase her survival odds. In a sense, this inversion of mass media coded discourses provides an optimistic shade: it is not the mediation trying to grasp Katniss, but her knowledge of media codes subverts the usual process. She can interpret what her audience, mentor and Gamemakers could be thinking, pointing at a superficial reading that the audience and/or those subjected to formulaic representations are capable of retaking the means of mass media to themselves.

I say the argument is superficial because, although it is not entirely incorrect, it does not consider Baudrillard's argument of the television as provider of white distracting noise. Even if one considers Kellner's less pessimistic and deterministic view of the role of mass media communications, the current coded discourse of mass media is still qualified as a mode for those "in power", be that power economic or political. Granted, these codes can be subverted and manipulated for survival, as it is the case with Katniss, they are not inherently transformed to provide anything else than the simulacrum of the tribute she incorporates. In view of Hutcheon's concept of parody of coded discourses, this polysemic effect is one of the results of parody without ridicule, as discussed when she compares the functions of irony with those of parody, in its pragmatic range.

Another complex issue when discussing the novels' parody of mass media as a coded discourse involves the notion of a victor in reality television. While Panem's Hunger Games require a victor in order to appease political oppressions that are widespread within the districts, YF's Painball is eternally on. When Toby describes the rules for the televised death-match, she comments on how people did get out of Painball, should they survive long enough, but the surviving criminals would be immediately substituted by new felons, resulting in a constant live feed of gore and violence, sold as justified punishment for political criminals "and the other kind" (98). It can be noted that both entertainment strategies are symptoms of different stages in the process towards

what Baudrillard believed to be the disappearance of all meaning from signs. While the victor is still considered a necessary relief of tension in HG, Painball is aired for the sake of being aired, without any particular significance ascribed to it by their producers or even by its audience.

Among the textual genres of television, advertising plays an important role in shaping identities, creating demands and providing identities. In both novels, advertising is present on several spheres: company names and their slogans and catchphrases for television shows are the most prominent. Kellner approaches advertising's influence in his theory of media culture and its symbolic power:

> Such symbolic images in advertising attempt to create an association between the products offered and socially desirable and meaningful traits in order to produce the impression that if one wants to be a certain type of person . . . then one should buy Marlboro cigarettes. . . . In a postmodern image culture, individuals get their very identity from these figures, thus advertising becomes an important and overlooked mechanism of socialization, as well as manager of consumer demand. (*Media Culture*, 248)

Within the coded discourses of mass media in general, the practices of advertising help construe identities resulting from consumption and access to products. Advertising reaches all layers of society, fabricating needs for those who can only access slogans and ideas, but are not able to acquire any given product and satisfy that same fabricated need. Typically, as described by Kellner, an advertisement will work on associating positive traits to a product regardless of it actually resulting from its purchase.

In YF, slogans influence on several occasions the narrations of both Toby and Ren. As Toby remains stranded in the AnooYoo Spa after the waterless flood, she spots

what at first she believes to be "a clump of sheep" (238). However, upon closer inspection she identifies the animals as Mo'Hairs, a splice engineered to produce hair implants. Her memory immediately retrieves their advertisement: "Onscreen, in advertisements, their hair had been shiny – you'd see the sheep tossing its hair, then a beautiful girl tossing a mane of the same hair. *More hair with Mo'Hair!* But they're no faring so well without the salon treatments" (238). The parodic distancing from actual advertisements in the excerpt lies in the inversion: the sheep is shown tossing its hair in what seems to be an anthropomorphic fashion and the following image, as the sheep's hair is supposed to have been implanted onto a woman, is described by Toby as her carrying a "mane". The piece aims at associating the great hair with the human, but Toby betrays a different effect in which the girl seems to have gained an animalistic trait. In addition, it is possible to see how, upon seeing the real animals, Toby is reminded of their advertisement; the coded discourse is recovered from an actual experience, and not the opposite.

As a character that has been distanced from the habit of consumerism her entire life, it is not surprising that Toby recollects advertisements more often than occasional experiences with actual objects. Later in that same chapter, when she remembers the stages of her going into hiding from Blanco, she dwells on signs, slogans and brand names. "On the front of the board it said, UGLY DUCKLINGS TO LOVELY SWANS AT THE ANOOYOO SPA-IN-THE-PARK! *Goose your self-esteem!* On the back, ANOOYOO! DO IT FOR YOO! On the brochures it said, *Epidermal enhancement! Lower cost! Avoid gene errors! Fully reversible!*" (260). In this case, there is even the allusion to ugly duckling as a symbol of physical imperfection followed by a swan; the spa customers would, then, purchase the idea of feeling like the swan in the fable, regardless of the results of whatever treatment they try.

In HG, slogans also permeate experience. Most of them, however, relate to the Games themselves. The inversion of the coded discourse, in that case, tends more to the side of ridicule. After describing so-called safety regulations in District 12, Katniss references Capitol discourse. According to her narration, hunting beyond the district fence is punishable by death, its prohibition justified as an attempt to protect citizens from wild bears and other animals. However, Katniss seems sure that such a regulation is no more than an excuse for controlling all access to food the district can have. "In the autumn, a few brave souls sneak into the woods to harvest apples. But always in sight of the Meadow. Always close enough to run back to the safety of District 12 if trouble arises. 'District Twelve. Where you can starve to death in safety,' I mutter" (6-7). The fact that the character immediately looks around to confirm she is alone displays the way even small signs of discontent could bring her problems.

Another slogan that sets the tone of the narrative is the Capitol's "Happy Hunger Games, and may the odds be ever in your favor" (9). In its first appearance, it is pronounced by Katniss and Gale, mocking the Capitol speech: "Besides, the Capitol accent is so affected, almost anything sounds funny in it" (9).[18] This slogan in particular is often portrayed ironically (by those subjected to the oppression of the Games), and somewhat seriously by the mass communication systems of the Capitol. There is parodic distancing from advertising as a coded genre in both slogans from HG because they expose the structure behind the illusion of positive traits in what is being sold, with the additional mark of ridicule in some of their uses. In order to emphasize that, it is relevant to consider Hutcheon's assertion that "many parodies today do not ridicule the

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[18] HG was adapted into a movie in 2012. In scenes with Effie Trinket, the character that Katniss and Gale mock in the referred excerpt, her speech is carried out either with a lengthened vowel or a schwa, typical of the Received Pronunciation in English. I believe that the linguistic choice may be related to the very constitution of Panem, in its thirteen districts serving a capital that resembles U.S. history – specifically, the era of the thirteen colonies with Britain as the center of power.

backgrounded texts but use them as standard by which to place the contemporary under scrutiny" (57). In the specific case of parody of advertising within the coded discourses of mass media, there is a hint at an exposure of its function in the contemporary era – an extramural attempt, one may argue, at educating the audience towards the simulacra involved in propaganda.[19]

Similarly, YF presents a closer look at the structure of consumerism broadcast through mass media regarding names of places and institutions. While that exposure of the contemporary occurs mostly through slogans in HG, YF also questions the formulas of advertising through the commerce taking place a few years before the waterless flood. Franchises are named SecretBurgers ("no one knew what sort of animal protein was actually in there" (33)), AnooYoo Spa, Rarity restaurants (whose meaning superficially was that its meat had such good quality that it could be cooked rare, but actually referring to endangered species served in secret dining rooms), Happicuppa, or even Fender Bender Body Shop. The irony, in that case, also seems to provide a ridiculing effect for two reasons: readers may recognize references to current businesses (coffee franchises, fast-food joints) and they may identify the irony in the naming of the same businesses – an irony that manages to expose the aims of advertising. Such is the case with Rarity, whose double meaning to its name may cause the reader to notice other processes of naming and propaganda going on in contemporary advertising – but taken to its extreme in fiction.

The same occurs with the names given to universities: Glenn/Crake attends the Watson-Crick Institute, named after the two scientists known for discovering the double helix shape of DNA molecules. The choice of name is in tune with one of YF's central themes, genetic manipulation of animals and humans in an attempt to establish a post-

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[19] I mention the possibility of an extramural, educational drive in this parodic satire of slogans based also on the fact that HG is a book targeted to teenagers and young adults, according to Rachel Elfassy Bitoun in her online article, "The Political Message of *The Hunger Games*" (available at: <http://the-artifice.com/the-hunger-games-political-message/>. Accessed on Oct. 13, 2015).

human utopia. On the other hand, Jimmy, Ren, and Toby attend the Martha Graham Academy, influential dancer and choreographer. When Ren meets Bernice on campus, the historical character has a symbolic appearance:

> The statue of Martha Graham was a sort of mascot: it showed her being Judith, holding up the head of her enemy Holofernes, and the students had painted the head's neck stump red and stuck steel wool under Martha's armpits. There was a flat base right underneath the Holofernes head where you could sit. (287)

Curiously, Martha Graham did write choreography for the story of Judith and Holofernes from the Bible.[20] That particular role refers to a woman defending her people – as a university mascot, her statue is interfered with: red paint in Holofernes's neck may display a symptom of the era of desensitized violence in which the characters live. In *Oryx and Crake*, the role of violence is more explicitly described as a form of entertainment, but the taste for gore resonates in YF. In addition, the steel wool added to Graham's statue's armpits shows the mockery from the student community that finds humor in attaching typically masculine traits to a dancer impersonating a strong female figure. The references and ironic play with conventions contribute to the parodic effect of YF.

At this point in the discussion, it is necessary to establish if all presence of coded discourses in a given novel (science fiction or not) is a result of a parodic process. Mikhail Bakhtin, in *The Dialogic Imagination*, comments on the various elements that may be present in the composition of a novel. In particular, the idea of heteroglossia is relevant to this issue:

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[20] In the *Book of Judith*, the widow seduces and beheads Holofernes, a general trying to invade and destroy her town. The plot and criticism dated from 1987 is available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/1987/10/26/arts/dance-graham-troupe-in-judith-and-rite.html>. Last accessed on: Oct. 14, 2015.

> The novel orchestrates all its themes, the totality of the world of objects and ideas depicted and expressed in it, by means of the social diversity of speech types [*raznorecie*] and by the differing individual voices that flourish under such conditions. Authorial speech, the speeches of narrators, inserted genres, the speech of characters are merely those fundamental compositional unities with whose help heteroglossia [*raznorecie*] enters the novel . . . (263)

For Bakhtin, then, heteroglossia is the result of an artistic composition by those fundamental units (speeches, discourse): direct authorial, everyday narration, letters and diaries, extra-artistic narration and character voices (262). That said, heteroglossia is not the same thing as parodic use of coded discourses, even though both concepts do not contradict each other.

The parody of the coded discourses approached in this chapter differs from the notion of heteroglossia in two main ways. Firstly, as it is shown in the textual evidence provided, mass media as a coded discourse are displayed as a filter through which many characters have been taught to view the world. There are several passages in HG and YF that show characters recalling formulas and patterns from television and advertising when exposed to concrete experiences, that is, the formulas precede actual contact with a product, an animal, an idea. The fact that these codes are imbued in the characters' voices and perception questions the formation of identity of the narrative voices in the novel, while narrative speech as a whole is one variant in the formation of heteroglossia. The second type of speech that could be seen to consider mass media would be Bakhtin's fourth item in the several discourses in a novel.[21] That level still indicates that there is an authorial, individual presence behind the chosen genres, which is my belief to not be the

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[21] "4. Various forms of literary but extra-artistic authorial speech (moral, philosophical or scientific statements, oratory, ethnographic descriptions, memoranda and so forth)" (262).

case in all instances. Secondly, heteroglossia does not consider the dialectical relationship between an artwork or discourse and the parodic text through the ironic distancing examined by Hutcheon. Although there is a kind of polyphony in the voices and discourses identifiable in the novels studied and that same polyphony relates strongly to heteroglossia, it is important to affirm that parody of coded discourses is not simply another voice in the novel format.

On occasion, the merging of voices is intricately joined with the formulas of mass media. In HG, for instance, conventions of the documentary genre are identifiable in Katniss's account of how Panem came to be:

> He lists the disasters, the droughts, the storms, the fires, the encroaching seas that swallowed up so much of the land, the brutal war for what little sustenance remained. The result was Panem, a shining Capitol ringed by thirteen districts, which brought peace and prosperity to its citizens. Then came the Dark Days, the uprising of the districts against the Capitol. Twelve were defeated, the thirteenth obliterated. The Treaty of Treason gave us the new laws to guarantee peace and, as our yearly reminder that the Dark Days must never be repeated, it gave us the Hunger Games. (21)

This excerpt, already discussed in its kidnapping of history in the previous chapter, is filtered by several factors. The first one reminds the reader of a history documentary, with the economic and social factors leading to the war and the societal structures that rose from its remains. However, that documentary tone is interfered with by value lexical items such as "shining", "prosperity", and "peace". This interception is related to the source of that speech: the Mayor, every year, comes to the podium before sorting the year's tributes, and reads out the narrative.

In addition, its contents reach the reader through Katniss's perspective. When she claims "The Treaty of Treason gave us new laws to guarantee peace" (21), the layers constituted by formulaic language, the Mayor's obligation to be a voice of power, and the protagonist's derision, all provide the result of an excerpt that communicates the structures behind historical knowledge and instruments of power. Following that same logic, Katniss on occasion mocks the state propaganda and its conventions: before the reaping, while taking to her friend Gale, she comments, "We all feel a little closer today, don't we?" (8), signaling an ironic distance from one of the conventions of reality television: that its representation of so-called reality provides an instrument for identification and socialization among its viewers.

In both novels, the conventions from mass media can be seen as referring to a coded discourse rigidly controlled by sources of power; that presence influences the way the characters and readers perceive the world around them and even shape the way they express themselves. However, there is ironic distancing in the several forms of inversion, exposure, and satiric play applied to mass media as a coded discourse. It is clear, as well, that these inversions often deal with representations that claim to be realer than the real, echoing Baudrillard's theory of the simulacrum. In the next section, I discuss how these parodic elements can contribute to another trait identifiable in the novels: metafiction.

2.2 Parody and Metafiction

The concept of metafiction is related to literature in the same way breaking the fourth wall is related to the theater. Although metafiction, as a literary characteristic, is not exclusive of postmodern literature, it has been used to question and to expose the process of writing and representation itself. In "Canadian Historiographic Metafiction", Hutcheon sees metafiction as "fiction which is, in some dominant and constitutive way,

self-referential and autorepresentational" (228). Metafiction is often seen at the structural level of a given novel, exposing the fragility of the narrator or the mediation by that same narrator of an array of events in order to construe a story.

Metafiction, Hutcheon proceeds to analyze, can expose a variety of issues from society: in the case of historiographic metafiction, for instance, it may question the truth value of history. On the aesthetic level, metafiction can serve to expose fiction as a representation derived from reality, discarding any attempts of masking fiction as real life. In another book by Hutcheon, *The Narcissistic Narrative: the Metafiction Paradox,* the critic even approaches the relationship between metafiction and parody:

> In much metafiction the reader is left with the impression that, since all fiction is a kind of parody of life, no matter how verisimilar it pretends to be, the most authentic and honest fiction might well be that which most freely acknowledges its fictionality. Distanced from the text's world in this way, the reader can share, with the author, the pleasure of its imaginative creation. In forcing recognition of a literary code, parody seems to be one important means to this paradoxical kind of narcissistic extramural involvement. (49)

Curiously, while in this work Hutcheon relates parody to the idea of the extramural, in *A Theory of Parody*, as discussed previously, she comments on the intramural characteristic of parody, as a double-voiced commentary between artworks or codes. It is possible that in this context the extramural of metafiction is the lack of pretense at verisimilitude.

In *A Theory of Parody*, she adds to the matter, "Postmodernist metafiction's parody and the ironic rhetorical strategies that it deploys are perhaps the clearest modern examples of the Bakhtinian 'double-voiced' word . . . as discourse *within* and *about* discourse" (72). Hutcheon relates the supplementary relationship between postmodern

metafiction and parody to Bakhtin's concept of authorized transgression in the carnival (74). She argues that parody enables the transgression of aesthetic boundaries, but it can only go so far if it should be still recognized as parody – neither can the encoder transgress too much, so that the decoder can never access the ironic distance, nor can the encoder transgress too little, or the parody can actually be an allusion.

YF and HG both carry traits of metafiction. These traits, as I demonstrate in the following paragraphs, are connected to the awareness of a public that reads the text or to a narrator's realization of how the story has come to be and how to organize a story. For instance, in the HG universe, the reader only has access to the metafictionality in Katniss's narration in the last chapter of the third book, *Mockingjay*. "I got the idea from my family's plant book. The place where we recorded those things you cannot trust to memory. . . . Then, in my most careful handwriting, come all the details it would be a crime to forget" (451-2). The pretense that Katniss was narrating at the moment, the claim of a truth simulacrum to her story ends with the revelation that she wrote all she lived in the Games, as best as she could remember, as a coping mechanism. Similarly to the claim of faithful representation in television that HG comes to parody, Katniss's narration is exposed as a therapeutic endeavor – the facilitating device is exposed and the reader realizes that Panem's history is fiction even if written by Katniss.

Awareness of the framing by the narrator as a metafictional trait also appears in YF: like Toby is aware that she "was the frame" (239) changing her memories, she does not trust her impressions and portrayals of what happened to her, as when Lucerne enters Zeb's room crying dramatically – at least in her biased perception. When Lucerne tells Toby the story of how she met Zeb, Toby's mediation of her story is constantly interrupted by her personal impressions. "She'd stopped in front of Zeb, who'd been watching her come towards him as if he'd been a sailor dumped into the ocean by mistake and she'd

been either a mermaid or a shark. (Toby provided those images: Lucerne said *Fate*.)"
(117). Those instances that pervade YF mark an awareness of narration as a filter over a
series of events; there is, in this case, a humorous effect by the contrast between Toby's
images and Lucerne's. There is a comical result as the reader becomes aware of this
narrative framing typical of metafiction.

In HG, metafiction is also expressed by the several instances of ambiguous
audiences. In the previous section, I discussed how Katniss often embodies a given role
– the fragile, romantic, tragic teenage lover –, manipulating her behavior for the audience,
at the same time she is trying to please her mentor through that same performance for
sponsor gifts. At that point, it is hard to distinguish Katniss's target audience; public
commotion attracts sponsors, but those sponsors have their gifts filtered by the mentor.
As a result, her actual audience is ambiguous.

Similarly, in Haymitch's first appearance in the novel, during the reaping
ceremony, Katniss perceives his own behavior as ambiguous regarding its targeted
audience. After she volunteers and takes the stage, the citizens do not applaud as requested
by Effie Trinket. The uncomfortable silence is then broken by Haymitch:

> Haymitch chooses this time to come staggering across the stage to
> congratulate me. "Look at her. Look at this one!" he hollers, throwing an
> arm around my shoulders. He's surprisingly strong for such a wreck. "I
> like her!" His breath reeks of liquor and it's been a long time since he
> bathed. "Lots of…" He can't think of the word for a while. "Spunk!" he
> says triumphantly. "More than you!" He releases me and starts for the front
> of the stage. "More than you!" he shouts, pointing directly into a camera.
>
> Is he addressing the audience or is he so drunk he might actually be
> taunting the Capitol? (29)

Haymitch's ambiguity serves as protection from retaliation; the fact that it cannot be definitely stated whether he talks to ordinary Panem citizens or the Capitol behind the power structure, with the addition of his drunkenness, prevents any punishment. At a metafiction level, ambiguity of audience can widen the scope of possible interpretations, as is the case with Haymitch's drunken rage. Double or polysemic messages are conveyed, and, in the impossibility of establishing the aim of the encoder, several things can be communicated or portrayed at once.

Later in HG, Katniss is presented with rich meals given to the tributes prior to the Games themselves. As she arrives in the Capitol, she is overwhelmed by the availability of food: "Chicken and chunks of oranges cooked in a creamy sauce laid on a bed of pearly white grain, tiny green peas and onions, rolls shaped like flowers, and, for desert, a pudding the colour of honey" (79). To her, a single meal is a rich mixture of several ingredients that are hardly attainable:

> I try to imagine assembling this meal myself back at home. Chickens are too expensive, but I could make do with a wild turkey. I'd need to shoot a second turkey to trade for an orange. Goat's milk would have to substitute for cream. We can grow peas in the garden. I'd have to get wild onions from the woods. I don't recognize the grain; our own tessera ration cooks down to an unattractive brown mush. As for the pudding, I can't even guess what's in it. Days of hunting and gathering for this one meal and even then it would be a poor substitute for the Capitol version. (79)

Initially, there does not seem to be a connection between assembling a meal and metafictional implications. The excerpt communicates the complications derived from attempting to replicate something done by those in power; in other words, Katniss finds herself imagining how she would use her own means to produce something Capitol-like.

The result is more than disappointing, since she does not have the means to reproduce a meal that is only available closer to the source of political and economic power. That reconstruction displaces the sense of the natural in the reader, an effect typical of metafiction. In this case, it challenges the naturalness of a complete meal the readership is probably familiar with; not unlike narrative tools, when disassembled, the privilege of a cooked meal is exposed. According to Hutcheon, "self-referential fiction has the potential to be an 'auto-critique' of discourse in its relation to reality" (*Parody*, 82). Not only is fiction exposed as a set of elements, much like a meal, but also the absolute character implied by Katniss's first-person narration is exposed as formed by several elements in the character's previous experience.

Another expression of metafiction in postmodern novels is the commentary on aesthetic values within the narrative. One of the uses of parody is also related to an exposure and questioning of current formulas and values, especially aesthetic values, notions of beauty and quality. In YF, Ren comments on Amanda's art, after she becomes an adult:

> Amanda was in the Wisconsin desert, putting together one of the Bioart installations she's been doing so far. . . she was dragging the cow bones into a pattern so big it could only be seen from above: huge capital letters, spelling out a word. Later she'd cover it in pancake syrup and wait until the insect life was over it, and then take videos of it from the air, to put into galleries. She liked to watch this move and grow and then disappear. (56)

Several conclusions can be drawn from Amanda's art. She uses remains of animal life, already scarce before the waterless flood, to create words; living animals proceed to eliminate those words. Later in the novel, Amanda will claim to work with up to four-

letter words (304), and writing with syrup and watching insects eat the words until they disappear are the first things she does after meeting Ren when they are children (76). From a very early age, Amanda is interested in the disappearance of abstract concepts, or names, as resulting from animal life.

Amanda's commentary on art can be seen as a statement of the disappearance of referents, which can relate to their detachment from a real-life signifier (echoing Baudrillard's belief that signs would come to relate only to each other in the hyperreal) and to a foreshadowing of the Crakers, the posthumans that are revealed towards the end of the novel, people who lack symbolic thinking and narrative customs. Symbols lose their importance as living creatures feed and fight to survive.

Additionally, Amanda's art is also highly mediated, contributing to the interpretation of signs dealing with each other with the passing of time. Amanda's actual installation is only seen by herself and her team: she must record videos, the first mediation, and then frame them in art galleries, where they are finally available to the public – the second mediation. In her conversations with Ren, Amanda mocks the rich men financing her installations, an interaction that indicates that either she does not believe they would possibly comprehend her art or she is only pretending to be an artist, so they would give her money. However, it is important to remember that Amanda, like any artist, does not have the power to dictate value or even to impose an interpretation on her work. Although she can reveal what she, as an individual, had in mind, she cannot provide a fixed explanation for her art, be it to deceive those who finance her or to communicate complex ideas. It is the same with parody: while there is an actual individual encoding parodic elements in an artwork, the encoded intent, not the individual's intentions, are what is necessary for parodic effect – in addition to a certain background shared between encoder and decoder, as discussed in the beginning of this chapter. This

metafictional abstraction from Amanda's art clarifies the relationship between parodic intent and its effect on fiction in general.

Among the instances of parody discussed throughout this section, it is possible to see how metafiction is intertwined with parody and how such a close relation is displayed in HG and YF. Metafiction is often present in the ambiguity of target audiences, a commentary on art and aesthetic value, on the mediation involved in building a narrative, and the motivations for writing and narrating exposed in the fictional work itself. Metafiction reaches out to the reader, breaking the novel's fourth wall – as Hutcheon might say, extramurally –, sometimes working hand in hand with parody in the construction and challenging of double-voiced discourses.

2.3   Critical distance and the problem of representation

The novels analyzed in this thesis, among several other characteristics, present plots occurring in alternate societies. However, neither Panem nor the remains of North America from YF claim to be wholly separate societies from the current, existing one and its dynamics of power. In fact, it is arguable whether creating an alternative result to the influence of humans on the planet is even possible. While that is the claim in some science fiction works, critics like Terry Eagleton and Fredric Jameson, for instance, disagree that it can be achieved. For Eagleton, science fiction often changes a few variables, but maintains the structure of known or current societies: "What renders these tales so suspect is not the strangeness of these beings, but exactly the opposite. Apart from an extra limb or two . . . they look much like Bill Gates or Tony Blair" (31). The crisis of representation is essential to discussing science fiction, in particular utopias and dystopias, as is the case of my corpus.

Fredric Jameson goes even further in analyzing the postulation and subsequent representation of imaginary societies. For him, science fiction is "not to give us 'images' of the future – whatever such images might mean for a reader who will necessarily predecease their 'materialization' – but rather to defamiliarize and restructure our experience of our own present" ("Progress *Versus* Utopia", 151). Utopian/dystopian science fiction, then, exposes the present instead of endeavoring to predict the future. Societies imagined in science fiction do not have to be fully alternative.

The extrapolations resulted from observation of predicted near futures are ideological in nature. Similarly to the narrative framing done by Toby (as she herself notices when remembering her parents and her old house), Panem and the post-apocalyptical world of Toby and Ren came from mediated choices – as Jameson would argue, these choices are always permeated by some ideology. However, since authorial ideology is not the center of discussion, acknowledging that mediation occurs on all levels of artistic creation allows for a more complex view of an artwork. For instance, in *Seeds of Time*, Jameson states that much is said about first-world culture and its influences on third-world culture, but talk of a second-world culture faces resistance or denial (*Seeds*, 73). He additionally comments on the challenges of imagining human relations without commodification; however, "We can, in other words, say what a properly Utopian literature might look like even if we are utterly incapable of writing one ourselves" (*Seeds*, 74).[22] I can conclude that, while acknowledging the hard work of writing utopian literature, Jameson believes that such representation is possible.

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[22] While Jameson, in this chapter, discusses utopian literature in broad terms, I contend that the rationale is extended to science fiction utopias/dystopias. He also discusses the subject in "Progress *Versus* Utopia" and *Archaeologies of the Future* dealing with the terms interchangeably.

After acknowledging the challenges posed by creating alternative or extrapolated[23] societies, it is important to look at how the structures from HG and YF are, after all, permeated by simulacra in their parodic inversions. Simulacra often expose illusions of single, unambiguous relationships between signifier and signified. As a result, as simulacra are used in the composition of parody of coded discourses, certain characteristics formerly taken as unmarked choices and phenomena are reassessed. In the two dystopias, the simulacrum is a tool for problematizing concepts of signified-signifier relations. Among the illusions exposed by parody construed via simulacra, it is possible to identify two main types, which I call illusion of choice/identity and illusion of unmediated communication.

The illusion of choice/identity is closely related to Kellner's views on Media Culture and Jameson's commodification of human relations. It comprehends phenomena such as several small, nearly identical variables of products, actions, styles. It is also associated to the illusion that freedom and identification are freedom to consume, or to be objectified. Several instances of this type of exposure through parody are identifiable in the two novels that were analyzed: for instance, in chapter one I discussed the recurrence of a "shiny" quality concerning objects of desire, or even objects that are represented as desirable. For Ren, Amanda's purple phone has a shiny quality to it that ceases to impress her after she is returned to the world behind the walls of the Compounds. The coded discourse of advertising systematically creates relations of identification between objects and human characteristics and feelings, ranging from satisfaction and happiness (mobile phones), better-looking bodies (Spas), unreal and naturally impossible sexual satisfaction (the BlyssPluss pill). In HG, that practice absorbs even human individuals, since the tributes are marketed like commodities for product placement.

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[23] By using the term "extrapolation", I refer to Atwood's words when she discusses differences between speculative fiction and science fiction, as cited in chapter one.

The simulacra used in coded discourse to expose illusion of choice are also present in depictions of religious discourse: Adam One's statement that "action precedes faith" (168) elucidates the view of religion as a coded discourse, exposing Toby's (and all the Gardeners') lack of choice in faith. Her actions that are interpreted as an expression of Gardener faith are not a result of an inner epiphany or of a rational consideration of options. Like several other members (Ren, Rebecca, Zeb), Toby becomes part of the cult because it was her only option for survival, or because she lacked any other option. Indeed, she comments on how she did not remember making any decision to join the group (43).

In addition, parody of religious discourse also crisscrosses identity politics. To be a Gardener implies more than pacifism and preparation for the waterless flood. They are considered "ecofreak[s]" (40) for not consuming anything that resulted of animal exploration, except for recycled items; they have a reading of the Bible, as discussed previously, that includes all animal species on the same strata of power occupied by humans. Later on, a group of Gardener abandons pacifism in order to attack franchises and to steal corporate information for sabotage (the MaddAddam group). In other words, to be a Gardener entails several political affiliations; still, several of its members are there under an illusion of free choice. However, on its own the Gardener faith is not necessarily a parody exposing the illusion of choice. Actually, this view is clearer once other cults that influenced the world outside the Compounds are considered: Toby's narration mentions Lintheads, Asian Fusions, Redfish, Wolf Isahianists (41). Although the Gardeners are the most influential religious group in the trilogy, they are one in a myriad of cults with values that are hardly mentioned for their small differences among them.

In addition to the illusion of choice and identity, the presence of simulacra in parodic elements of the novel elicited the exposure of another type: of illusion of

unmediated communication. It exposes the fragility of the idea that media, especially mass media, show "life as it is". Among a myriad of facts, reality or truth are unnecessary. This is the case, for instance, of the story planted by the CorpSeCorps in which Toby runs away from the house she shared with her father until his suicide. She concludes to herself that it was easier for them to substitute reality for rumors. It is the same with the internet in the pre-waterless flood world – several websites publish theories on the inner workings of the Compounds and the CorpSeCorps, but reality is buried in a sea of fiction, rendering all information useless regardless of its truth value.

The illusion of unmediated communication is very strongly emphasized in HG. Reality television and its claims of representation of real life and real people are exposed in the Hunger Games, carried out to distort history and establish another version of it through the Treaty of Treason. Children are shaped and trained to fit a certain type; they are raised to distrust people from other districts; overall, they are commodified. Their agency, even when left to their own devices inside the arena, is extremely limited and their skills can still be worth nothing, since the Gamemakers are allowed to kill a tribute randomly on a slow day – the claim to faithful representation disappears in the face of a threat to entertainment.

Unmediated communication is exposed beyond the environment of mass media, in the questioning of storytelling perspectives and individual narratives. Toby's admission to framing her own past, Ren's narration in a mixture of diary and boredom exercise, and Katniss's traumatic experiences being handled through writing and bearing witness to the war are all shown to be partial accounts, framed by their perception and by their experience. Although the characters' narratives are not guided by the principle of entertainment, as is the case with reality television and ultra-capitalist efforts for the *status quo*, these narratives are a character's effort to make sense of one's experiences.

Simulacra, in this case, expose the limitations of storytelling, ranging from randomness to predictability, an attempt to make sense of a group of events that are selected to construe a coherent whole. Storytelling is a tool of mediation, as well, guided by several factors. Some characters and narrators build for themselves a world that becomes "truth" in its own right: the hyperreal.

Exposed unmediated communication can also be seen in the parody of science fiction discourse. In the subversion of genre conventions, the concept of science as absolute knowledge is questioned. The creation of the Crakers and the attempt at extinguishing humankind show the extreme reached by Crake's assessment of the role of science. The exaggeration in valuing the hard sciences identified in *Oryx and Crake* and furthered in YF can be identified as one of the factors in scientific advancements multiplying out of control. The belief, in the history of science fiction, that the genre should broadcast the wonders of science is questioned in the quasi-scientific explanations found in YF and HG. The traditional info-dump is substituted by vague and mediated accounts of scientific advancements that near the realm of "magic", in the sense that science, in the novels, seems to act on its own volition and its ways are not quite clear for the narrators or for the readers.

Finally, the effect of the illusion of unmediated communication is that it prevents unmediated contact, shaping perception according to formulas and planting distrust where they are lacking. That is the case of the tributes in HG, Ren's experience while working at Scales and Tails and during her period of isolation, and Toby's jealousy of Lucerne's relationship with Zeb, to name a few examples. As the three characters survive the waterless flood and a revolution, these constraints seem to lose force; with the remains of their worlds, they signal the beginning of re-writing and re-creating their history and their story.

Ultimately, all of these are subcategories of an illusion of true reality: several characters, groups or even some narrators claim to know "the truth", but all have partial knowledge that renders the statement impossible and biased on itself. Parody exposes the reliability of formulas and codes, although it does not necessarily preach their extinction. It is possible to remark that parody of coded discourses exposes illusions of true reality and establishes these fragilities to incentive a proceed-with-care ethos when dealing with mediated discourses. That fragility is also identifiable in the relationship between parody and metafiction; the illusions of communication and choice also point towards the artwork itself and its function. The same illusions exposed about the extramural sphere of the artwork apply to the novel itself, signaling its limitations and its frames. These illusions are revealed at a literary level through the ironic distancing that parody allows to take place. In these novels, simulacra are directly related to unveiling illusions about coded discourses, and art is among them, especially in relation to art's connection with the hyperreal.

Final Considerations

The topic for this thesis was chosen because of the strong presence of mass media forms, among them advertising and television, and the narrative that seemed to contradict those media discourses. The hypothesis proposed in the introduction was already the result of an intricate analysis of the influences acting on the characters – that is, initially I believed that individual narratives, such as Katniss's, Ren's, and Toby's, were a more reliable account of events than the filtrated versions portrayed in mass media generally. Baudrillard's simulacrum proved to be a useful concept for uncovering meanings that are inter-relational instead of dual. Instead of looking at the simulations caused by the codes and formulas of television and advertising, other forms of telling stories started to reveal their ambiguities as I continued my research. It is not that mass media, as coded discourse, provide more limited representations in themselves, but all communication carries within itself its restrictions – and literature is a fruitful field for exemplifying such limitations and exploring their effect on humanity.

Initially, I was interested in investigating how the simulacrum was present in world-building processes for dystopias. The initial hypothesis implied that the alternative worlds created in science fiction dystopias were only created by the addition of simulacra in their relationships – in technology, in science, in human interaction –, when, in fact, it was not the case. The instances of hyperreality already present in contemporaneity were the ones expanded and structured in a way that would cause estrangement to the reader – hence the parodic effect. For instance, the ominous effect of forcing children to kill themselves in a televised arena, although unlikely, feeds itself from the current sacrifice of private, unscripted experiences for commodifitication, entertainment and subsequent profit. The highly ironic slogans in YF resemble the irony of marketing products in such a way that is entirely unrelated to the product itself, as ironic as placing a cowboy with a

cigarette. These are only two of the several already ongoing processes, signaling that simulacra are already present in daily experiences, but they are unacknowledged.

In chapter one, I analyzed the various spheres of HG and YF that showed instances of the simulacrum. After conceptualizing it, I discussed the issue of identification through commodities. When Ren once wishes to be identified with the Pleebrats, her wish is projected onto Amanda's purple phone, which became, for her, both a symbol of their friendship and of the freedom she perceived Amanda to have. On the other hand, in HG, Katniss herself was commodified in a survival strategy to attract sponsors, whose gifts would save her life inside the arena. In the case of Ren, her desire is a result of being left out of the consumer society, instead of being immersed in it, whereas Katniss becomes the product, and not the customer.

In addition, as I analyzed the shift of value from objects to images and/or signs, it was noticeable that dealings involving objects would often include more of their symbolic value than their functional one. In HG, that happens both with Madge's pin, which would be resignified by the end of the novel, and with tessera, the compensation given to families for higher odds on reaping day. While one means richness, and later on an attempt at revolution (never meaning adornment), the other means hunger and desperation, more than a year's worth of grain.

Chapter one also included a genre discussion on science fiction, given that Baudrillard writes about the three levels of simulacra in literature: the first, turned to nature, the second, at the industrial revolution and its progresses, and the third, at the time only postulated, at the hyperreal. Compared with Suvin's and Robert's opinions on what exactly science fiction could be and Glover's and Atwood's claims that YF, at least, was speculative fiction and not science fiction, I concluded that the arguments for considering both novels speculative do not necessarily contradict those of science fiction – not to

mention that pinpointing the characteristics ascribed to a genre does little to develop critical work on a novel. The most relevant issue was that, as science fictions, HG and YF are not novels that approach Baudrillard's third level simulacra at face value or directly, but they signal an approximation to his postulations.

The relationship between the simulacrum and the panopticon was also discussed in chapter one. Based on Foucault's panopticon, not Bertham's, and comparing with the movement of the formulas of mass media and their influence on the character's perceptions, I concluded that continued exposure to those codes leads to a kind of "panopticon of the mind", instead of the physical structure of the perfect prison. Characters are so exposed to cameras, to slogans, to fixed roles, that appearances of agency are actually permeated by those formulas. Examples of that include Katniss's continued performance for the cameras whenever she could not tell if she was being filmed or broadcast and Ren's habits in the Sticky Zone, including her exercises on dance and facial expressions, since no one could be watching. In that sense, unquestioned exposure to formulaic representations can actually result in perfect prisoners without even the need for building a prison.

At that point, which Kellner called "Baudrillard's technophobia", it seemed to me that simulation is not something that only happens from the source of power to those subjected to it; although in a smaller scale, characters and individual narratives also do their fair share of framing, organizing and selecting information. As a result, human communication can be as mediated as that of mass media, as is the case with Katniss and Peeta's supposed love affair and Lucerne's tale of kidnapping. Unfortunately, while in these occasions simulation could indicate character agency, an individual force against the formulas, in the novels they seem to be isolated. Other perspectives of analysis may show more options of escape and survival from these formulaic practices.

In general, chapter one exposes a gradual loss of direct meaning between signs and concrete signifiers. In the end of HG, actions gain several levels of meaning. As Katniss realizes the rest of her life will involve charged performances in front of the cameras – representing one thing for the Capitol citizens, another for the districts and yet another one for President Snow –, the several possible meanings enter into conflict and become increasingly indiscernible. In YF, on the other hand, signs are actually being lost: with the discovery of the Cracker society, which lacks history, narrative and symbolic thinking, Jimmy's final reappearance could represent the agonizing language, or, rather, a return to the pre-simulacrum stage, in which words are only spoken and only used in their denotative meaning. However, further studies may approach that conflict in the following book, *MaddAddam*, whose plot may be interpreted as a rebirth of symbolic thinking instead of their destruction.

In chapter two, I turned to instances of parody in the novels, establishing as a departing point my agreement with Hutcheon's definition, which states that parody does not necessarily entail ridicule, instead it refers to an ironic distancing. Another foundation of the discussion in the second chapter is Hutcheon's claim that parody, though often creating a bond between two artworks, can also be of a coded discourse, especially in genre parody. Additionally, the concepts of intramural and extramural were used so as to distinguish the reach of the parodic play in the two novels. That reach comprehends parody as an intramural practice, arguing about codes and art within itself, without explicit attempts at bettering a political or cultural situation external to the literary work.

Three main coded discourses were analyzed in their parody: science fiction, religious discourse and mass media. In that section, science fiction was not analyzed as genre without fixed definitions, but its history since *Frankenstein* was instrumental for establishing it as a code with conventions and even occasional formulas. Differently from

science fiction from the half of the 20th century, HG and YF do not preach valuing science and its progresses without restrictions. In fact, the usage of characters that are so distant from sources of power results in a portrayal of science that is ironic and even irrational. That portrayal can be seen in the beauty treatments and post-human engineering from YF and the medicine and surveillance technology from HG. The lack of the so-called "info-dump" and its substitution for vague explanations that do not mean anything for the protagonists and narrators further the sense that science, for Others, is not that distant from magic.

Regarding religious discourse, the rites of Christian religions are the most distinguishable as influences in the Gardener cult, even though the traditional Christian readings are subverted to deny that humankind could be superior to animals in any way. The attempt at reconciliation between science and religion, evident in Adam One's sermons, also marks an ironic distancing from both religion and science fiction. The latter comes from years of portraying religion as a wild and irrational habit; Adam One and the Gardener's sustainable practices synthetize those values in a dialogical summary. Additionally, there are several other cults practiced in the Pleeblands, an argument for the Gardener faith to be an icon of identification as much as any other belief system.

Infotainment, a term borrowed from Kellner's work on Media Culture, is discussed regarding its mediating quality. The merge between entertainment and information is striking in HG: the Games at the same time portray history and provide the entertainment of children struggling for survival. The roles for the characters to play are very distinct and limited. Katniss manages to uncover some wiggle room as she discovers her romantic act could increase her chances, but the optimism derived from that relief is, as argued in the chapter, very limited. YF, on the other hand, is pervaded by slogans,

whose exaggeration evidences the extremes it portrays, revealing the mechanisms behind advertising for consumer identification. Customers purchase ideas, not simply products.

The section concludes with the idea that mass media codes and formulas come to shape perception and assign arbitrary value to human characteristics, resulting in a myriad of voices that are part of the novels' structure. It is also clear that these formulas from the coded discourses are the result of processes involving the simulacrum – the dissonance between meaning and object that limits perception and experience is traced back to the simulacrum element in parody of coded discourse.

Although metafiction was not among the original aims of this thesis, after looking at the presences of parody it seemed necessary to comment on the relation between metafiction and parody. The exposure of fiction as fiction, without the mask of the literary pact, provided for an overlapping of voices: the self-aware narrator narrates him/herself and the story, with occasional accounts of his/her motivations, much like parody overlapping its source, creating a synthesis of that distance that, once recognized by the reader/decoder, completes the dialogue of parody and metafiction. The presence of metafiction in HG and YF will evidence that paradox: Katniss's and Ren's writing, along with Toby's narration, are self-aware and used as a coping mechanism for survival, corroborating Sá's claim of storytelling as survival. However, at the same time, the metafiction elements in these novels indicate the aforementioned concept that storytelling is not absolute as an account of events, since it may manipulate and even recreate the past.

Finally, after concluding that the simulacrum is, indeed, recurrent in the parodic play with coded discourses, I proposed that the effect created by that narrative tool is to expose and question illusions of "true" reality. Since we narrate within language and that very language is, in many spheres, limited and subject to codes and collocations, it would be unrealistic to admit that literature, or art, or mass media, can provide unequivocal and

absolute accounts of history, politics, or even of personal experiences. Postmodern novels, aware of that limitation, embrace that limitation with a variety of voices accounting for the same elements, as witnesses composing the fragments of a crime, never being able to fill in all the blanks. The pessimism that may result from the conclusion that no communication is absolute or unframed can also be seen as an opportunity for visualizing the forces executing these limitations, be them on language, on representation and on self-awareness. While it is troubling that no narrative is entirely trustworthy, in literature or in daily life, being able to identify common illusions taken for granted provides for a clearer view of the sources of power, on the big and on the small picture.

Baudrillard's hyperreal can be seen under a different light after these observations. The hyperreal, as that sphere where signs deal with each other, is both a presence and a proof of absence regarding signs and narrative. As the mentioned illusions expose the fragility of binary and unambiguous concepts of signs, the emergence of the hyperreal can indicate a break from labels, as a flood of language, allowing for a rebirth that would provide less mediation in interpersonal relations. Language, undervalued and surveilled throughout *Oryx and Crake*, YF and HG, undergoes a crisis of status, as it is stifled by coded discourses and collapses after the waterless flood in HG and after the war that follows Katniss's first Games. However, as signs seem to lose meaning – as Toby sees herself as the frame of discourse, as Katniss realizes her simulation efforts have only sunk her deeper into formulaic behavior after she becomes a victor –, there is conflict and subsequent rebirth in Toby's myth-making with the Crakers, one of the main themes in *MaddAddam*, and in Katniss's war experience in *Mockingjay*. Although confirming these statements escapes this thesis' corpus, the line towards that development of rebirth of signs can be seen in the process of coded discourse parody in HG and YF. I would say,

indeed, that the novels studied in this thesis mark the process of decay of signs, before that crisis and subsequent rebirth.

However, just like the flood in HG is an ironic inversion of the biblical flood, that flood of language does not guarantee that from that point onwards signs would be "truer", but the game established among signs from then on is more explicit. Simulacra, when identified and seen to expose those illusions, may lose any claims to concrete truth. The hyperreal is acknowledged as what it is: signs dealing with signs, rebel copies dealing with rebel copies.

Literature, then, by exposing its mechanisms and external sources of power, negotiates with the hyperreal as a necessity and as a consequence of recognizing all communication as mediation. That recognition occurring through parody also illuminates metafictional elements – the more the building blocks of literature are exposed, the more it can explore its synthetic relationship as a mediation of experiences and, at the same time, as an honest account of these experiences in its admission of guilt (of not being entirely trustworthy).

The conclusions from this thesis could benefit from further studies in the areas of Culture Studies, Postmodern Criticism and Gender Studies – both novels were written by women and my analysis of the presence of the simulacrum in the parody of coded discourses could benefit from a narrower cut, considering women's writing and the protagonists as agents (or not, and/or considering the framing of their actions discussed throughout the thesis). Additionally, testing this hypothesis with a wider scope of literary texts would be relevant to test whether I approached an overall tendency in postmodern science fiction or HG and YF constitute isolated cases.

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